

THE MERCHANT PRINCE

BY
H. C. BAILEY



METHUEN & CO. LTD.
36 ESSEX STREET W.C
LONDON

First Published in 1926

✓
PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I	ARROWS AND COWS	1
II	A COPE AND A BALDRIC	10
III	A KNIGHT AND A LADY	21
IV	THE PORTUGALS	33
V	A LADY LOVED A SWINE	41
VI	REWARD OF VALOUR	48
VII	MUCH CRY AND LITTLE WOOL	54
VIII	THE WIDOW'S DAUGHTER	86
IX	ARMS AND THE MAN	94
X	AN ILL WIND	111
XI	THE KING MAKER	116
XII	THE MANOR HOUSE	139
XIII	BREAD UPON THE WATERS	148
XIV	THE TOWN AND THE CASTLE	165
XV	THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN	170
XVI	KEEPING THE PEACE	194
XVII	THE KING'S PLEASURE	206
XVIII	THE LADY BY THE STREAM	220
XIX	THE VENETIAN'S COUNSEL	226
XX	SIR GILES COMES BACK	235
XXI	SIR GILES MARCHES OUT	245
XXII	THE KING'S SHIPS	252
XXIII	MY LADY GOES TO PRAYERS	260
XXIV	THE KING'S WAY	270

THE MERCHANT PRINCE

CHAPTER I

ARROWS AND COWS

ON the Salt Marsh the butts were set up and all the boys of the town had brought out their bows. It was an order. As soon as he boasted seven years a boy must learn to shoot a straight arrow, for any day the town might need to line her walls with archers who would not fail, and she had but five hundred men. Once when the French galleys stole into the haven, the women took fright, ran away and carried their men with them, and for a day and a night the French plundered the wine-collars and the wool-houses of Southampton and burnt the empty town. But that was a hundred years ago, before Agincourt and Poitiers and Crécy had proved that Englishmen were born better men than the French. Once and again the French ships had come stace, but the men of Southampton stood to their walls and beat off the armadas with no richer booty than the nuns of a convent beyond the town. The war had established their pride. It was from his castle at Hampton on the shore of the sea that Harry of Agincourt sent his challenge to the King of France. They built him his royal ships, too, and furnished him crews. They were busy in traffic with his armies. They had thriven by the war. They had honour to keep and good profit. Need was they should practise arms.

But the great days were done. No longer Harry of

Agincourt was King of England, but a saint, and the war had gone awry and England had lost all of France that she had won and was fallen out of heart and at odds with herself, great lords blaming each other for the shame of defeat and the loss of the revenues of France, quarrelling which should be master of his saintly majesty and England, small men weary of the blunders and burden of a war which brought them no more profit, fretful, scornful, fearful.

The Salt Marsh lay beneath the moated eastern wall of Southampton, flat, coarse pasture washed on two sides by tidal water. It gave ample room for the archery of an army, and the merry crowd of boys made no more than a patch in the long grass that rippled beneath the wind. But the cows of the town grazed there, and the mayor had made an ordinance that the town cowherd must be on duty whenever the boys came out to shoot. He was not. Where he should have watched between the cows and the flying arrows a boy lay munching like the cows at a blade of grass and watching them with wide eyes mild as their own.

He was a large youth, and the placid gravity of his face might have been a man's, but his loose, extensive growth was still ungainly and incoherent. He had grown out of his doublet, his breeches did not meet his stockings and he seemed still to grow (Father Nicholas would complain) as one looked at him, so much there was of bony arm and leg. Yet the creature was not in the mass lean, but bulky, and his dark face comfortably full. Thereby it denied the poverty of clothes outgrown and outworn, stained, darned, patched; it told of ample living, and desires as satisfied as the ruminant cows. But in its smooth lines the face was strange, for a boy's face hard to read, without a mark of interest or feeling, and he lay very still. If he had any thoughts in that big head, they were not allowed to excite him. He might have been asleep but for his chewing and his wide blue eyes. And with that brown skin and dark hair his eyes had no right to be so blue: no more than a boy's eyes had to be so dull.

The other boys were making a jolly game of their archery, shouting at good shots and bad, throwing down their bows and breaking away to chase each other and wrestle and fight, picking teams to shoot a match and helping their own side with a roar of flouts and jeers at the other. But the boy by the cows cared for none of these things. He had not curiosity enough to turn and see what was doing or who shooting well. He contemplated his cows with a steady, vacant stare.

Two men came out of the East Gate into the sunshine and revealed themselves persons of importance in their own esteem and the world's. The one was grave and reverend, all swelling, flowing curves in a long gown of black with generous bands of fur at hem and wide sleeves and neck, and the plates of a gold chain glittered broad on his bosom. He set off the other who flamed in red and white, who was long and lean, whose clothes clung to him like a skin, who had sword and dagger at belt of truculent length, who was in the van of fantastical fashion with shoes that thrust out points twelve good inches in front of him and a little contorted hat more like the shell of a whelk than anything in nature.

At a pompous gait they passed into the sight of the boy by the cows. He showed no seemly reverence, he was not interested in them, he did not rise, dull eyes watched them while they went by and did not look after them.

But the boys at the butts did their duty. The shouts and the rollicking stopped, those who were shooting put back their arrows, caps came off, silent and still they waited the pleasure of the great men.

He in the robe raised a fat, ringed hand. "Good lads," he approved them. "To work now, to work! Let me see your best. Here is Sir Giles de Roffa come to learn what brave archers I have in my boys of Hampton."

The lean man grinned, which by reason of a scar from the right eye took his wide mouth askew. "Come, you rogues, shoot me a match. Master Mayor has a silver

shilling for the best of you." The mayor looked sour, but was given no chance to deny it. Sir Giles took charge and hustled them. "What do you call this? Fifty paces? Ay, as a woman waddles." He measured the range with a glance and stepped out twenty paces more. "Here is none too long for you. God's body, you will never be archers if you shoot a short range. Your shafts have to go through gristle and bone, you whelps. Come now, who gives a lead? What, do you flinch? The devil blush for you! Why, there is none of you big rogues but should be in the white every shot. Stand to it, you." There was a boy standing to it, a lithe, shapely lad, desperate earnest, who took his time and did at last set his arrow quivering in the edge of the white. But Sir Giles mocked at him. "God ha' mercy, here's work to hit a house! An archer must loose off on the word. No more of this for God's sake. Shoot roundly. Who is next?" He stamped his foot. "Away with it, away! Oh, the devil's merry with you. Look you, if you lads were on the wall, a pack of brisk fellows would be over and in while you were dwelling on your aim. Loose off, you sluggards." So he hustled them, till he fell to cursing because they took no aim at all and, being human, they did not shoot well, and in the end the best shot was that first arrow on the edge of the white.

Nevertheless, Sir Giles de Rossa ceased to curse and smiled upon them and told them that they were lusty lads and with handling would be archers yet. Whereat they looked at each other and grinned sheepishly, very hot and uncomfortable. "Where is my gossip that showed the way?" Sir Giles beckoned to the lad. "Ay, you are a pretty piece"—which was true enough, but the boy, who was pale while his fellows flushed, looked at him fiercely. "Whose whelp are you?"

"I am Osbern Shirley, so please you."

"A poor yeoman's son," the mayor explained.

"Ay, ay." The little eyes of Sir Giles puckered. "Give him his shilling, Master Robin." And the mayor, after

a little fumbling, made the best of it with a lordly gesture. "That was a shrewd shaft, Osbern. But I will have you do better or I have done with you."

Osbern gave the shilling to a friend. He turned on his heel, he waved the others aside imperiously. He plucked out an arrow and shot again and there came a yell "In the white! Hola! In the white!"

"By the ragged staff!" Giles de Roffa burst out laughing. "Master Mayor, he hath found an answer for us both. My Lord Osbern, a word in your ear. Come to the castle, lad. I think the captain hath a place for a sturdy rogue like you. Here is a luck penny." He slipped a groat into the boy's hand. He tossed some silver pence among the rest and turned away.

The mayor lingered. "Osbern, be not froward," he said majestically. "You owe this fortune to me. Remember that I have spoken well of you. Study to deserve it. Let your father hear of this."

Osbern bent his head, but he did not take off his cap. What was a mayor to a boy whom a knight and my lord captain sought?

The knight and the mayor made their way back to the town in grave discourse. The mayor hoped that the knight would give a good account to the captain of his boys of Hampton. For this Captain of Calais was my Lord Warwick, who was also Chamberlain of England, owned half of it and was bidding to be the greatest man in it. Moreover, since he held Calais, he could do many a good turn or bad to the trade of Southampton with Flanders. The knight hinted that all things, the services of Sir Giles de Roffa, yea, even the goodwill of my Lord Warwick, were to be had at a price. Whereat the mayor became silent and gloomy, and in this condition his eyes wandered and fell upon the boy recumbent by the cows.

"Ho, rogue!" he called, and the boy turned over and stared at him. "Hugh Camoys!" The boy touched his cap. "Come hither, sirrah."

The boy stood up and shambled towards them and

took off his cap and pulled down his short doublet and pulled up his short stockings, a forlorn, ungainly creature.

"Where is your bow, you rascal?"

"It was broke St. Swithin's Day. I am a poor lad, master, I could not get me another."

"Fie, fie, are you so curst you have no friends?"

The boy shifted his feet. "Nay, master, I cannot tell that."

"He that hath no friends is a rogue, sirrah," said the mayor.

"God save you, Master Aylward," said the boy; and Giles de Roffa guffawed, but the mayor, glaring at him, could not tell why and saw no guile in the boy's plump, dark face.

"Sirrah, you are a lazy, false knave. Any lad would have lent you a bow."

"Nay, master. They say I am too hard on the slaves. I have no luck with them ever."

"Go your ways, you shall be whipped."

"Why, now, master, that is not fair on me. That——"

"You know the rule, sirrah. He who stands not at the butts stands at the whipping-post."

"And so I did stand at the butts. But your poor cows came wandering by, and if I had not minded them they would be stuck so full of shafts as a hedgehog o' spines, and sour milk you would have had this night."

The mayor looked about him with a choleric eye. "What have you to do with the cows? Where is the herdsman? Where is Azor?"

"Why, master"—the boy made round eyes,—"*old Azor* he is making a drench for that *old bull* of yours," and said it glibly, though he knew that Azor, the town cowherd, was sleeping off his drink by the moat.

"Well, go your ways. To herd kine, it is all you are fit for," the mayor swept on.

"God ha' mercy on you, master," the boy said.

Giles de Roffa chuckled at the mayor's elbow. "That is a lad of spirit," he said.

"He? A dolt, a sluggard. It is the town fool. His mother has it in mind to make a priest of him."

"A priest, ha?" Sir Giles grunted. "And what is his mind?"

"Nought. Why, you have heard. He has not the wit to blow his nose."

Sir Giles grunted again and looked back at Hugh Camoys who was again lying down beside the cows.

The smaller boys came back to the town in a merry crowd, the big important fellows by twos and threes and last of all, as befits greatness, Osbern Shirley with some anxious to be his familiars, obsequious.

"Fie, look at old Hugh, the slug!" one spied him and tossed a pebble at him.

Hugh looked at it, looked at them and rolled to his feet, "I was not asleep," he said with slow indignation. "I saw everything."

They laughed at that. "Good old slug! Did you tell the mayor that? It is you for a whipping!"

But Osbern was too great to endure such vulgar mirth. He drew off from his courtiers with some ostentation and took Hugh's arm.

Hugh slouched on with him. "Ay, lad, you ha' done bravely," he smiled. "I reckon you are a made man."

"Faith, I taught that knight not to mock at Hampton lads. But it was nothing. A score of us would have done as well if he had not been bawling."

"Ay, but you put him down," Hugh chuckled. "You have the head for it, Osbern."

"Fie, it is but luck," Osbern smiled, "Did you hear? He bade me wait on the lord captain. My father will be blithe. He has mighty honour for my Lord of Warwick."

"Think of that now! Why, here is a great fortune. You will go march to the wars and come back a gilded knight. God save you, Sir Osbern."

"You rogue," Osbern laughed, well enough pleased. "Faith, Hugh, I have a mind to venture."

Hugh turned solemn again. "Well, I will not say you are wrong," he said slowly.

This chill approval startled Osbern. He was silent. He looked queerly. "What ailed you that you would not shoot?" he snapped.

"Why, lad, you know that I cannot shoot."

"As well as the rest of them."

"Not as well as Sir Osbern."

"What, old Hugh," Osbern pressed his arm, "you will not make bad blood of that?"

Hugh laughed. "Good faith, not I. You may hit the white with every shaft. But give me leave, I will not shoot to miss."

"You are as good as another."

"Ay, so it is. Which is not good enough. So I hold off."

"But every man must stand to arms."

"So did my father—and I am the only son of my mother and she is a widow."

Osbern stared at the plump face. "Why—what then? What is in your mind?"

"To mind the cows, brother," Hugh laughed.

"Oh, if you jeer at me——"

"Not I."

"By the holy rood, if you talked so to any but me they would call you a coward and a churl."

"It is true," Hugh said quietly. "And I should not care. But you do not call me so, brother."

"As you do, so must I think of you."

"Even so. And I of you. When you are a golden knight. And I—am minding the cows."

"Oh, Hugh"—Osbern broke out in angry laughter—"it is a priest you were made for."

"Peace be with you, knight," said Hugh and turned from him. They were close upon God's House gate and he heard Azor, the drunken cowherd, snoring.

He put a foot into the man's belly. "Azor! Azor, you sot! Here has Master Mayor been crying for you."

The man sat up and coughed and rubbed his bloodshot eyes. "The mayor?" he said hoarsely. "Where be your mayor? You are a naughty, false rogue, Hugh Camoys. I will remember it to you, I will."

"Wake, man, wake. He was here blaming it on you that you did not watch the cows while we shot. He would have you whipped."

"Hang him, he is no Christian man." Azor struggled to his feet.

"But I told him I was charged to mind the kine, for you had a drench to make for his old bull. Do you hear me? See you tell the same tale."

Azor gaped, Azor grinned, about that bull Azor said something coarse. "I'll tell un," he chuckled. "The silly tup. Fine I will tell un. Ay, Hugh boy, you do think of things."

"Mother likes a pitcher of cream, Azor," Hugh smiled.

"She shall not lack it, my dear. And Master Mayor, he'll not lack a pint of water in his butter. The pesky old wether. That is what he is, child. An old wether that has broken into clover and must eat and eat till he bursts his belly, the fool. Master Mayor!" He rolled off in a mockery of the mayor's swelling port, calling to the cows.

And so Hugh Camoys went home alone, which was not new for him.

CHAPTER II

A COPE AND A BALDRIC

INSIDE the gate was a medley of little houses built of wood and mud. A narrow lane was kept clear under the wall and made a highway, but out of it opened courts and alleys about which the houses stood jostling in close disorder, built as each man chose and gathered stuff on the scrap of land he could make good against others. It was a quarter of poor folk. The merchants, the master craftsmen, had their houses apart, a street or more for each trade, handsome enough. But under the east wall were the hovels of the journeymen, the labourers, the men who had failed to win a place in the guilds and had no right to anything, not even livelihood. And here was the home of Hugh Camoys.

His father had been a Hampshire yeoman who sold his small estate to the rich house of Du Pré that he might equip himself as a mounted man-at-arms with three footmen at his tail and win knighthood and fortune in the French wars. But he chose his moment ill, and Joan of Arc made an end of his hopes and him, and Eleanor Camoys was left with nothing in the world but a baby. She might have served in the household of Sir Ralph du Pré, for of his grace he offered to make her waiting-woman to his new bride; but she chose to serve her own baby, and she came to a hovel in Southampton and stitched for his bread, owing nothing to any creature, gaining little enough of any. So Hugh Camoys was nurtured.

But when he opened the door that night, the tiny room had a splendour. Gold and purple seemed to fill

it. Spread across the table, falling on either side, was a great piece of velvet, stiff and glittering with embroidery. Yet there was something else in the room. The one chair held a friar in a grey gown. He was a little man, though he had a paunch. He nursed in front of it a jug. Above his bushy grey beard, he was chubby and rosy, and his bald head shone. "God give you grace, child," he said and rotated the jug and drank.

"And to you all your need, father," said Hugh.

"Nay, child, never pray for that," said Father Nicholas, sighing satisfaction. "That is death to the soul"; and he looked down into the jug measuring how much ale was left. "Your mother is gone for another quart. A devout woman and kindly. Honour her, child."

"I study to do it," said Hugh meekly.

"Alack, boy, you are too fair spoken. You have always a neat, comely answer. That is not nature nor right in a child."

"I would not always be as a child."

"Oh, foolish one. You will never be so happy again." Father Nicholas shook his head, and emptied his jug and shook his head again. At that moment, so well had he judged his drinking, Elinor Camoys arrived with the second quart. "Good thanks, good dame"—he reached for it. "Your house is gracious." He savoured the fresh ale.

She smiled at him, smiled at her son and drew up a stool to the table and began to embroider the velvet. "Did you shoot well, Hugh?"

"Osbern Shirley did best. He hit the white at a hundred paces."

"Pho," Hugh's mother drew a thread sharply. "Osbern is always shooting. And he is a man grown."

"Fie, look at that creature," said Father Nicholas with a jerk of his elbow to Hugh; "he thinks he is a man already. And he is big enough for two."

"It is true," said Hugh meekly, "I am as old as Osbern. Master Mayor gave him a shilling and a knight who was

there is to take him into my Lord Warwick's household. He will bear arms and go to the wars."

Eleanor Camoys looked up. "Only Osbern?" she said. "Is my lord seeking men?"

"I cannot tell that. But it is only Osbern Shirley. Because he shot best."

"Why," Father Nicholas smiled, "what was Hugh Camoys doing?"

"I am nothing with a bow, father."

"So Master Hugh does not take arms. Master Hugh does not go to the wars. But I thought he was now a man."

Eleanor Camoys looked up. "Have I done you any wrong that you speak so to my son? You know well that there is no war now. To serve in a great lord's house—I would not choose that for my boy."

"Oh, I cry you mercy, good mistress," the friar chuckled. "It was not I put it in his head he was a man. He bragged of it."

"Every man does not go to the wars, father," said Hugh meekly. "I think you did not go."

Father Nicholas drank of his second quart. "Holy St. Francis, here is an answer!" he chuckled. "What, child, would you wear a friar's gown?" He smoothed down his over his paunch. "Do you hear a call, my son?" he turned up his eyes.

Eleanor Camoys stayed her hand and sat gazing at Hugh and her bosom rose. Hugh was considering Father Nicholas with grave interest. "I have wondered, my father," he said. "I have thought that it might be."

"God of his grace, judge you worthy," said the friar in a professional voice. Then he looked into his ale and drank again and smiled. "Surely it is the best life in the world. Here am I an old man who have nothing but the rough gown that covers my dirt and I sit in a poor widow's house and drink her small beer and am happy as a king. But what would you have, child?"

"If I should be as happy as you, father, I were well content," said Hugh.

"Fie, Hugh, fie," his mother cried anxiously, "it was not happiness that the good father sought when he took his vows. It was a hard, holy life."

"Holy God, grant it. Hard, not a whit. As I hope to be saved I chose it because it was the easiest life for me. This is a cruel world and full of striving. My father bred me to be a mariner, but I always feared the sea. The prior of St. Denys, he bought me, for I was a pretty boy, and taught me to be a great clerk and gave me to my Lord of Winchester. But I was weary of the labour of my head. Then I heard the call to be of the poor brothers of St. Francis, who have no perils to dare nor any work to do with hand or head, but to live kindly among poor folk. The which is great happiness." He drank with slow relish.

"Is it not, mother?" Hugh smiled at the thin worn face which answered him with puzzled eyes.

"Why now, mark you," said the friar quickly. "I had no mother to look to me nor any child to be my care. Thus have I found happiness."

"If I am happy my mother will be well content," Hugh laughed.

"God forgive you that you should boast of that. Oh, Hugh, Hugh, all the town calls your mother kind, but what are you called?"

"Most often they call me slug," Hugh said meekly.

"Hugh has been a kind son to me, Father Nicholas," his mother cried. "You should know that who know our house well."

"Peace be upon it. I know he never did harm in all his days." Father Nicholas looked pensively at the empty pot. But he was not offered any more.

"Father, will you say as much for me to the prior?" Hugh smiled.

"Hugh!" his mother cried.

And the friar said: "Do not mock, child. This is no light thing. If you would put on the grey gown, you must be content with nothing all your days."

"Why, father, what better is there for a poor widow's son?"

"I dare not deny you," the friar said slowly. "It is an evil world and full of bitterness and striving. There is no peace nor comfort in it unless a man will put away all desire and live to be kind. But I cannot tell that you are born to be content therewith."

"Father, he is a boy," the mother cried, "he does not know."

"Of all boys that ever I saw, this boy knows himself best," said Father Nicholas. "Come hither, Hugh."

But Hugh did not come. For the door swung open and the pompous port of the mayor was seen.

"Ha, Widow Camoys," the mayor made his entry and looked round for a chair, but since Father Nicholas sat on the only one he found none.

"Peace be with you, my son," said Friar Nicholas.

"What, friar, have you set up house with the widow? Give her joy. Faith, she must be thriving if she can keep you in ale."

"He brings joy wheresoever he goes, a blessed man!" the friar beamed. "And all the town thrives now Master Aylward is mayor"; which was notoriously false, for the trade in wines was gone awry, and the trade in wool was dull and the town was fretful.

So the mayor scowled. "You have a saucy tongue, sirrah. Your prior shall hear of this."

"Be sure that he shall, my son Robin," the friar said heartily. "Alas, he will bear it hard that you speak lewdly of a poor brother of St. Francis."

"Oh, father, Master Mayor meant no wrong," Eleanor Camoys cried. "I pray you, sir," she thrust forward her own stool, "sit, I pray you. How can I serve you?"

The mayor sat down heavily. "What I meant I said," he announced. "That is my way. It is ill a widow woman should cherish a friar in her house. You are too soft and weak, widow. See to it. Here is that great boy of yours grown a lazy, masterless rogue." He scowled at

Hugh who touched his forelock. "I must hold you to blame."

"Well said, my son," the friar nodded. "Defend the fatherless and the widow, that is your duty. God will reward you. And maybe man."

"Look you, good woman, I am not come to hear fools prate," said the mayor loudly. "I had a mind to help you to some work for that poor needle of yours. But I see you have no time for honest labour."

"Time enough, God knows," the woman said eagerly. "My master, you know I am proud to serve you."

"Well, if you please me, widow, I shall make it known." The mayor picked up the velvet on the table. "What is this frippery?" he frowned.

"Oh, my son, my son," the friar flung up his hands. "God forgive you, you know little of the inside of God's House. Oh, heathen, that is a cope, a cope for our prior."

"You be cunning beggars, who beg such a gift from a poor widow."

"Have no fear, my son. She shall be paid in good broad marks."

"You grey friars grow mighty rich," the mayor scowled.

"Nay, my son Robin, it is the rich men of the town who pay blithely for God's service. How much does master mayor give to our poor house?" He held out a fat dirty hand.

"Fie, you are sworn to poverty. How much do you pay her for that cope, friar?"

The friar gave a grunt. It was not his answer, it was extorted from him by Hugh's bony fingers pinching the fat of his arm. He turned up his eyes. "Alas, my son, we be a poor house. We can give her but twenty marks for the rich stuff and all her fine work. It is hard a poor woman should be so ill-requited. She would not do it but of her kind charity. I pray you help us to do her right."

The mayor stared. He did not believe that the grey friars would pay twenty marks for a cope. He suspected a trick to squeeze some money out of him. But if they

were paying ten the widow Camoys had found work at better pay than he had ever given. He was much annoyed, but at the moment saw no way to punish her. For he happened to need her.

"Well, let it be," said he generously. "I have a mind to bid you broider me a baldric, widow."

"Oh, sir, I thank you. You are gracious."

"See that you put good work in it. You made one for the Bailiff of the Court. I saw it on him when we were coursing the Shirley hares. A tawdry thing. I must have something better."

"Fie, master," said Hugh, "you would not have us sell the bailiff what is fit for the mayor."

"Right, child. I would have each man keep in his station. Now for my baldric, it must be rich and fine yet not over-bright. I am called to hunt in the King's forest with Sir Ralph du Pré and my Lord Warwick. Let me see your silks and your stuffs, widow."

"Pray, master, when is the noble hunt?" said Hugh.

"Monday se'nnight, child."

"Why, that is little time."

"Go to, your mother can work long these days."

"Indeed, sir, I think I have what you need," said Eleanor Camoys anxiously.

"I want no common thing, woman," the mayor frowned.

"I hope I do no common work," she cried.

Hugh shook his head at his mother. "We have nothing fit for Master Mayor in store."

She stared at him, smiling. "Good lack, child, what do you know of it? I mean the royal velvet. Indeed it is a rare piece, sir. Let me show you."

"Where is it? In the press?" Hugh spun round before her and plunged head and shoulders into an old chest. "I will find it. Oh, you were thinking of this." He drew out a strip of green velvet backed with silk and worked in silver and rose colour but half finished with many a loose end. He spread it out upon the cope with tender care. "Oh, faith, a noble piece." He smiled complacently.

The mayor handled it. "Pho, is this your best? It is a poor thing. What, widow, you said it was finished. This is scarce begun."

"No, master. This is not what I spoke of. The golden velvet, child. Come, let me find it."

"Oh, the yellow," said Hugh. "Oh, mother, that is not fit for Master Mayor. And you know that is sold. I told you. Sir Giles de Roffa has bespoke it." His mother stared at him.

"Fie, fie, do you sell to that fellow?" the mayor cried. "I am sorry for you, widow. I hope you may see his money."

"Never fear, master," Hugh laughed. "He is to give us five silver marks."

The mayor laughed loud. "Five golden elephants! Ay, he would promise you anything, child. Come, let me see this wondrous baldric."

Elinor Camoys made to get it out of the press, much hindered by her son who protested in loud whispers: "Nay, mother, Sir Giles bespoke it. And it is promised. He is a knight and sure his money is good." But the bewildered woman had the golden baldric out at last and displayed it.

"Ay, that would take my lord's eye," the mayor chuckled. He laid it across his swelling chest. "Yes, yes, it is well enough. Come, I like it, widow. I will give you two marks for it. It is overmuch, but the thing pleases my fancy and I would not stint you."

"God ha' mercy, master," Hugh cried, "it is sold already. I told you."

"Go, child, shut your babbling mouth." The mayor laid down two marks.

"No, faith, mother, we dare not," Hugh cried. "Let me have it, master, it is sold." He plucked it from the mayor's shoulders and set it aside. "Look, here is the other, a noble piece. My mother will make it much richer than the yellow. But not for two marks, no. It is not the worth of the velvet and the silk, and nothing for my mother's work."

"Rascal, be still. You lack a whipping. You shall have it. Look you, widow——"

"And I pray you, what has he done, sir?" the widow flamed.

"Oh, the rogue, the rogue," Father Nicholas chuckled. "He asks a fair price for his mother's work when master mayor would beat the widow down."

"Let it be, father," Hugh said calmly. "It is no matter. Master Mayor has no mind to buy. That is all. Give you good even, master," and he put both the baldrics back in the press.

He rose again to behold the righteous indignation of a much-injured man. That any of the poor should dare to rise prices against him seemed to the mayor a defiance of God's order. That the Widow Camoys, hitherto a meek woman accepting any pittance he offered for her work, should so offend was a miracle of ingratitude. That she had found such a new market for her broideries she could afford to do so disturbed him profoundly. For he had made handsome profits by her wares. But he had to have that baldric. He had never seen one finer, no, nor its equal.

So at last: "I am not here to bargain with you, good woman," he puffed. "I will take the golden baldric," and he held out three marks more.

The widow, startled beyond words, dropped him a curtsy and hustled to get it.

"Oh, fie, mother, what shall I say to Sir Giles?" Hugh whined.

"Say what you will. Sell him the other," the mayor grinned savagely and strutted out.

Then Eleanor Camoys sat down pale and trembling. "Hugh! Hugh!" she gasped. "What possessed you, child? What have you done?"

"What was your price for the thing? A mark? Well, I have made four marks for you."

"You are a mad fellow. You have made him our enemy."

"No, he was never our friend. I have made him fear us."

His mother gazed in horror. Father Nicholas laughed. "I fear you, I promise you. Oh, rogue! And now shall I pay twenty marks for our cope? Or forty belike?"

"God forbid, my father," said Hugh meekly. "My mother will take nothing but the price of the stuffs. She gives you her work. That you know well."

"It is the poor who give. God will reward you, my daughter." The friar turned again to Hugh with a chuckle. "But faith, I began to fear you had sold it to Sir Giles Roffa."

"Oh, Hugh!" his mother cried. "God forgive you, child! What lies you have told!"

Hugh smiled. "Thus men buy and sell. Do they not, father?"

"So I have heard, my son. But what if Master Mayor talks to Sir Giles and hears the truth?"

"Fie, he will not talk. He fears the man. I have seen them together. But if he should hear the truth, he will have the more dread of me. For he fears those who are bold."

"God be gracious! You know too much, child. Prithee, what do you fear?"

"I fear God, I hope."

"I hope so, too. But, God ha' mercy, I am not sure of it. You go beyond me, child. Tell me, why did you beguile me with talk of leaving the world to be a poor friar? I almost believed you, you were so sadly earnest."

Hugh smiled. "And by my faith, I have thought on it."

"Holy St. Francis! What, shall I speak for you to the prior?"

"I pray you do so. Say that I am a poor lad and pray for his goodwill and study to deserve it."

"Oh, rogue," the friar shook a fat, dirty finger at him. "If you go on so as you have begun, you are like to need it."

"I think so, too," said Hugh meekly. "As I had need of yours to help me with Master Mayor. You have been

much my friend, father. I hope the grey friars will ever befriend me."

"Sirrah, we be friends of the weak."

"Oh, my father, who is weaker than I? I am a poor widow's son and clumsy and unskilled and the other lads all mock at me."

Father Nicholas jerked himself from his chair. "God be with you, but you frighten me," he cried, and he waddled out.

Hugh laughed at his mother's troubled face. "I cannot tell what he means, mother, can you? Frightened of me! Well, now, what is for supper?"

"Oh, Hugh, you are a wild, wicked fellow."

He took her in his arms and kissed her heartily. "You know better, my mother. Come, you have worked enough this day." He swept the cope from the table and put it in the press and set out wooden bowls and platters.

While he was busy came a scratching at the door. He opened it and saw in the dusk the red face of Azor, the cowherd, who thrust into his hands a pitcher and was gone.

"Good fellow," Hugh chuckled. "You will have a dish of cream with your porridge to-night, mother."

"Why, where is your cream from?"

"From Master Mayor's cows. An honest fellow is Azor."

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh!" His mother sat down and gazed at him in wonder and despair.

CHAPTER III

A KNIGHT AND A LADY

THUS Hugh Camoys began his adventures. He was already seventeen years old, but his seems to have been a mind of slow growth, and he had been a hewer of wood and a drawer of water till this day. He spoke the truth when he called himself a clumsy lad. Skill of his hands he never learnt, but he had small opportunity. No craftsman in the town would take an apprentice who was not a craftsman's son except for a great fee. It was the order of life that the children of the poor must be poor all their days. To buy and sell goods was forbidden except to the men of the merchant guild, and into the merchant guild no man could come but as his father's heir or at a heavy price or by rare privilege. For a boy whose father had left him nothing, there was no hope of more than rough labourer's work and a labourer's bare pittance. Hugh Camoys gave no promise of deserving more. He was strong and hardy but his hands would always blunder and he worked slow. This indeed was in his nature. To the end of his days he was awkward and so unhandy that they made a jest of it. It gave the loutish lad some distinction that Father Nicholas had contrived to teach him to read and write, but Hugh laughed when others called him scholar till they laughed, too. That he had no turn for anything had begun to be plain even to his mother.

They lived hard. Some odd moneys he would earn by portorage on the quays and in the market or going out to cut faggots and bracken, and faithfully brought his

pennies to his mother. He was accounted willing and trustworthy, but he did not seek work, he would lounge and look on. The town despised him and liked him, held him cheap and hired him for a trifle. His mother was respected. Any woman who wanted finer needlework than she could do would seek Eleanor Camoys. The mercers and the tailors would go to her if they had need of some rich piece of embroidery. But she was too proud and too simple of heart to bargain for the price her work was worth. So she lived laborious and poor. It did not come into her head to bear a grudge against the world for that. Hugh never grumbled if there was only rye bread and frumenty all the week through. He never told her that the boys made game of his old patched clothes. Eleanor Camoys would thank God for her son's contented heart.

He had done some little business peddling trifles of hers among the country folk at market; many queer plans had grown in his fancy while he loitered and watched the ways of his world and stored knowledge of men and things behind that heavy face, but it was Master Mayor who set him going.

On the morning after that affair of the golden baldric he was up with the first light to rummage the press which held his mother's work. There were other things beside the cope and the green baldric, a coif, breast pieces, a velvet bag embroidered, work that Elinor Camoys had done for the love of it with a vague hope that some one would buy, work too fine for the taste of the town.

She found him with his head in the press. "God bless you, child, what are you at?"

He came out with the green baldric in his hand. "This is a pretty thing, mother. Look, you must finish it. It will do us good, I think."

She said that was folly, and she had no time and she would not. She said that he must not meddle with her work and she put all the things back in the press. Yet before the day was over she did sit down with that green

baldric. She had a habit of doing what Hugh asked. It was seldom that he asked her anything.

So another morning came when Hugh went out with a bundle to try his fortune. He was in no hurry. He stopped to help a country woman with a load of garden stuff which was slipping off the over-burdened ass, and was paid with a bundle of onions. He went out by the Water Gate to the town quay and sat down on a bale of wool and ate an onion and watched what was doing. The port was not busy as it had been in the golden years when England ruled half of France. Even the precious wine trade was come upon evil days since Bordeaux fell to the French. There was not a cask to be seen, there was not a Bordeaux ship in the river. But the quay was lively enough. Two great Venetian galleys lay alongside, black and gold, flaunting the lion of St. Mark, and their slave oarsmen were breaking out cargoes of spices and sugar. Others of the year's fleet were at anchor beyond. A fat Flemish ship was swallowing bale upon bale of wool. Out in the stream a Spanish carrack swung and a queer low craft with the lateen rig of the Portugal coasters was making ready to sail with the evening tide. On the quay, amid the bustle of porters, were foreign shipmasters bejewelled and brilliant, emotional in broken English to the solemn, earnest merchants of the town. There were foreign seamen at horseplay among themselves, apt to make game of the toiling porters, venturing sometimes on a brawl with them. Hugh watched and munched and listened. Many most interesting things were to be learnt there. He caught glimpses of adventures on the high seas, of the way in which Venice worked her fleet of galleys, of what was doing in the ports of Flanders and the southern seas: he had hints of what they wanted from English quays and the Hampton merchants from them. He saw how many kinds of men dealt with men, jolly, greedy Flemings, Italians all airs and graces, but harder than the eager Fleming or the stubborn Southampton merchant, English seamen and porters who would not be driven but

worked mightily, Venetian slaves, sullen and slothful until they were driven hard, then taking the work as a game.

Hugh had no expectation that he would make anything of his pack of broideries there. The shipmasters and the merchants were too busy with their great affairs to care for such small stuff as his, it was too fine for the seamen; but a party of Venetian sailors came ashore, eager for land after long weeks of sea fare, and one of them saw him and his onions and gave a cry and grinned and held out his hand. Hugh bestowed upon him three onions and he laughed and shared them with his fellows and they ate greedily but Hugh's empty hand waited. One of them slapped it, another put into it a string of glass beads and they chattered at him and rolled away.

Hugh looked at the beads dispassionately. They were pretty things, blue or green as the light fell, but he did not admire them. His own taste, already quite sure of itself, was for rich, sober things. He was thinking that they would take some silly folk's fancy and might be very good value for three onions. He took up his pack and went back into the town.

By the wool-houses in Bugle Street, among the pack-horses of the flockmasters, he made his way to the stalls and shambles of Butcher Row and so out through the West Gate to an older quay. That was busy, too, but with a duller trade. Water and green meat were going out to the ships in the stream.

Little hoys were packed close along the wall, and the singing of the seamen came loud as they worked the cargo. For these were the craft that brought the Cornish tin for Hampton to gather and ship to all the world. Hugh lingered because he liked the west-country songs, but he knew well that the Cornishmen had nothing of any use to him, and he was soon marching on beyond the music and the thud of the metal to the clear space of the castle quay. Two archers in the blue and black of Sir Ralph du Pré, the constable, lounged on watch by the water-steps and waved him off, but he loltered looking up at the

huge grey wall. Behind it a hill rose sharply and on the summit the round keep. The archers shouted to him. He touched his cap to them and made for the gate.

That also had archers on guard, a superfluity of archers, some in the blue and black of Du Pré, some in my Lord Warwick's red and white. He was warned off again: "Away, ragged Robin. We want no beggars here."

He took off his cap. "Please you, there is here one Osbern Shirley, serves the good knight Sir Giles de Roffa."

The men in blue and black declined to know anything of Osbern Shirley, the men in red and white rebuked them. The lad was right. Osbern was of their company, the Sieur de Roffa's new page. "Nay, if your lord wants all the vagabonds of Hampton let him have them and welcome." So having set a pretty quarrel to work between Warwick's men and Du Pré's men, Hugh was passed into the castle.

He climbed the steps in the hill. A second wall girt the summit but neither wall nor its gate had guards mounted in peace and daylight, and he came unchallenged to the courtyard but there faltered and stood still. The mass of the keep lowered so vast, there were so many fine, lusty folk, archers, men-at-arms, swaggering in their lord's colours, dainty squires and their resplendent masters, women with tossing wimples and gowns that flowed about their bodies like water, all idle and gay. He had never been in that world before. He was afraid of it and it amused him. He moved along the wall, as though he and his shabby clothes would melt into its greyness, looking for some one on whom he might venture himself. At one of the doors of the keep he saw a woman, by her sober gown, by her demure, pert face surely somebody's waiting-woman. He slunk up to her and pulled off his cap.

"Fie, boy, what are you?" Her nose turned up. "You should come by the scullions' gate."

"Please you, pretty lady, I have that to sell which is too good for the kitchen."

"It has not brought you the worth of a pair of hose," she sniffed. "How came you here, rogue?"

"Speak me fair. I am known to Osbern Shirley and Sir Giles de Roffa." That startled her. "I have finer broideries in my pack than ever your pretty eyes saw." That brought her nose down.

"You? God ha' mercy! What do you know of broidery?"

Hugh winked at her. "I know a pretty thing when I see it. Do not you?" He pulled out the Venetian's string of beads and held them up in the light.

She took them, looked at them, laid them on her bosom. "They are well enough," she said carelessly. "What is your price for them?"

"Oh yes, they are well enough," Hugh laughed. "Else I should not have them. Only glass of Venice hath that colour. They are of the last new fashion in Italy. But for the price—why, maybe we will not quarrel over that, sweetheart, when I have dealt with your mistress."

She stared at him. She had plainly not expected so grand a way of doing business from his shabby youth. "God save you, my master!" she smiled. "What have you got for her?" He let her peep at the things in his pack. "Faith, that is noble, I will not deny you. But my lady is dainty and wayward. I cannot tell. Wait you here, child, I will do what I can."

But he was left there alone by the keep so long that he began to doubt ruefully whether he had given the beads for nothing and at last caught the eye of some truculent serving-man of Sir Ralph du Pré's, who came at him with a roar to know what rogue he was and what thief's business he had to do there. This zealous fellow would not believe he was waiting on my lady and bade him be off to the stables and take a whipping. "Peace be with you, my gentle lord," Hugh said meekly. "I am known here. Seek out Osbern Shirley, Sir Giles de Roffa's man, he will speak for me."

"The foul fiend speak for you! Get you gone." He threatened blows.

Hugh gave back meekly till he blundered by design into

men who wore the red and white of my Lord Warwick. "Save you, gentles," he pulled off his cap, "is there any here can help me to the noble knight Sir Giles?"

"Why, what have you to do with him, you mangy whelp?"

Hugh tapped his pack and grinned and looked knowing and his ears were boxed and he was bumped from one to another. But this bullying made some noise and it brought out Sir Giles himself with oaths and a "What is here? What is here? must you brawl? You shall be let blood, my masters, and watch all night to cool you."

"Sir, here is a scurvy pedlar makes bold to ask for you."

"And if a beggar from the lazar house seeks me is it for you to answer him? Away, go to your captain and bid him find foul work for you." He turned upon Hugh, his lean face grinning widely. "They are sped, sirrah. Walk aside with me. So. Who made you bold to call on my name? Wait. I have you now. You are the lazy boy of Hampton who would not draw the bow." He took hold of Hugh's ear. "What is the fiend's name brought you seeking me?"

Hugh smiled awry for his ear was being twisted. "Oh, sir, it is that you are the most splendid knight I have ever seen. But it is partly Master Mayor."

"Say you so? And what would Master Mayor have of me?"

"Sir, my mother makes broideries. There be none finer in all England. And Master Mayor is wont to buy of her. Now she had a noble baldric which she counted to sell to some great lord, and I, when I saw your worship," he looked at the splendour of Sir Giles from velvet cap to pointed shoes with reverent admiration, "I marked it for you. Then came to us the mayor to buy a new baldric, for it seems he is to go a-hunting with my lord and the constable in the King's forest—" Hugh allowed himself to chuckle discreetly—"so we sold him such an one as would please his worship. Then he saw this other and asked of it, and I told him I had hope it might please you, sir. But he

mocked at us, swearing it was too fine for you, and you were but a poor knight who would not venture in it. So he said, my lord, for I think he does not love you."

"This is a cunning tale. You would make mischief between me and Master Mayor, would you? Who set you on that, sirrah?"

"Holy St. Francis! No man, my lord. Mischief, not I, good faith, it is not in my heart. I am a poor widow's son and friendless and I come but to sell our broideries. God deliver me, how should it serve me to make mischief?"

"I have known it profit a man," the lean face smiled. "And I have known it hang a man, sirrah. Come, let me see your baldric. If that is not cunning work, too, God deliver you indeed, for man will not."

So Hugh took out the green baldric and displayed it over his arm in the sunlight, turning it this way and that to bring out the colours and he looked from it to Sir Giles as who should say, "Saw you ever the like of that?"

But Sir Giles surprised him. Sir Giles said nothing at all. He stepped back a pace and very solemnly he contemplated the baldric. Then he took it and pored over it inch by inch and his ugly face wrinkled into an expression of delight. "By the Virgin's bosom, this is rare work"—his voice was hardly more than a whisper. "I have never seen such, no, not in Bruges nor Milan. It does good to my heart."

Hugh was bewildered. He knew well enough that his mother's work was of the best, but it had never occurred to him to delight in it. That this grim soldier should talk like a lover about it was beyond understanding. And he meant it, not a doubt of him, he felt so, the queer creature! But then to say so, that was stupefying. A man who wanted a thing must cry it down, the simplest fool knew that. And if De Roffa was not a crafty, greedy bully, why there was no trusting looks or words or ways. Yet here he was raising against himself the price of a thing he coveted. Oh, the man was bewitched. But how much would it be safe to ask him? Would he pay five marks

like the mayor? Hugh watched him with a wary eye and wondered if he was wrought up to that.

But De Roffa spoke first, still in a whispering, purring voice. "Look you, child, I take it kind that you brought it to me," and his claw hands caressed the baldric. "I would give you ten marks for it. I know well that the work is worth more, but these are lean days and, by my faith, I think you will get no better price."

Hugh gulped. "Ten marks?" he said dolefully. "Alas, my lord, it is the finest thing my mother ever wrought!"

"She is a noble craftswoman. I would not stint her. But I see bottom in my purse, child."

"Well, my lord, for ten marks then," Hugh sighed. "It must go to you. I dare not sell to one who would not well become it. But I pray you, let us have your favour."

"And so you shall, by the ragged staff"—he clapped Hugh on the shoulder. He counted out ten marks and a shilling over. "Here is a luck penny for you. Let me hear of it when you have something rare. I cherish fine craftsmanship." He swaggered away nursing the baldric gently.

This was the first time that over Hugh met a man who found delight in good work and valued it above money. And he thought the man besotted. For he had made up his mind that men who lived by the sword, which certainly was the livelihood of Giles de Roffa and the only source of his power, were to be despised. But he was interested. He was always interested in new ideas.

In a pensive condition he became aware that my lady's woman was there by the keep waiting for him. He approached her slowly.

"God ha' mercy, boy! Have you sold a piece to Sir Giles de Roffa? There is brave work. Why, they say he gets his shirts from Milan."

"Very like," said Hugh carelessly. "Milan is well enough for shirts."

"Holy mother, here is pride!" she laughed. "Come, my lord, my lady waits on you."

She took him up to a little room of bare walls which had in it no more than a table and a couple of stools, and bidding him spread out his wares and my lady would come to him left him to it.

Then a child stood in the doorway, a small girl with a face like the Virgin, it was so calm and fair and wistful. Two plaits of yellow hair hung over her frail shoulders, but her eyes were very dark. It seemed to Hugh that she was the gentlest creature he had ever seen and pitifully sad. "Who are you?" she said, and her voice was by much too deep for a child.

"Hugh Camoys, so please your ladyship."

She gazed at him. "You do not please me," she announced. "You are an ugly poor knave."

"Alas, my lady, that is what I cannot help," Hugh smiled.

"But you need not be here. I do not like you." Nevertheless she came into the room. "What have you to do here? You are a naughty fellow. This is my lady's lodging."

"I wait on my lady."

"You? If you lie, rogue, you shall be whipped. My lady is my mother."

Hugh made her a bow. "Faith, I had guessed it, sweet lady. By your gentle courtesy."

She looked at him, she decided not to answer that, she passed him by as if he did not exist and began to look at what was on the table.

"Ay, are they not fine?" Hugh said. "See, here are dainty honeysuckles and a butterfly that sips at them." He held up a piece of embroidery. "Would you like to have them on your gown with your fair hair to make them sunshine?" He put the stuff against her.

She looked down at it, she smiled and then plucked it out of his hand. "You are not to touch me," she cried. "Fie, your great coarse hands. Let the silks be. They are not yours."

"Yes, lady. All are mine."

"I do not believe it." She stared at him.

Into the room came a woman as like her as darker colours and fuller form could be like childhood, she too was little, she was at pains to be haughty. "Christine!" she said. "You should not be here."

The child drew back but did not go. Still in grave wonder she gazed at Hugh.

My Lady du Pré also stared at him and with displeasure. "What boy is this, Marion?" she said to her waiting-woman.

"My lady, I am called Hugh Camoys."

After a moment more of disapproval. "Do I know that name, Marion?" my lady asked.

"My father held land under Marwell," Hugh said. "It is yours now. He was killed in the wars. This work is my mother's work, lady, and our poor living."

My lady was not interested. My lady was looking at the embroidery, not with the eager delight of De Roffa, with a cold, contemptuous eye. She twitched the honeysuckle piece aside and it fell on the floor. The girl darted after it. "Mother, I want this," she protested.

"Christine should not be here, Marion," said her mother and took the honeysuckle from her, watched her, white, furious, silent, removed by the waiting-woman and continued her inspection. Then she went out without a word.

Hugh sat on a stool and swung his legs and carefully and with force he spat. But he was a boy of great patience. He sat waiting.

After a long time my lady's woman came back. "God bless you, you are in luck. We will take the bag and the coif too and the shawl with the lilies. Here are ten marks for you."

"Your lady is a high lady," said Hugh meekly. "But fie, sweetheart, what are ten marks? It were great honour to us to serve her. But we be poor folk, my mother and I. Send you fair, sweetheart." He began to pack up.

"Go to, you must not haggle with my lady."

"Who, I? I thank God I need not haggle with any. My wares are good. I go my ways."

"Are you mad? You will never sell her a stitch so. And you might have had her favour, I promise you. She spoke well of your broideries."

"She was right," said Hugh and went on with his packing.

"Fie, fie, you must not deny her now. You will be whipped for a cheating rogue. Come, child, what did you think to ask for the stuff?"

"I did not think to be robbed," said Hugh.

"Holy St. Bride, you are a bold knave. Look now, she said to give you ten marks, I swear she did."

"Alas, poor lady," Hugh smiled. "Oh, I do not doubt you, sweetheart. I am sorry, that is all. If she had said twenty there might have been one for you."

"You are a rogue," the woman laughed. "And what if she said fifteen, my gossip?"

"Then faith, it is not I who am the rogue. Nevertheless there might be one for you. If I had a kiss for it."

"Go to, kiss your mother, child," said she and counted out fourteen silver pieces. But then she leaned forward to put in his reach a round cheek.

He took her in his arms and kissed her clumsily but hard. "God ha' mercy, boy," she gasped, escaping flushed and tumbled.

He picked up his money, he picked up his pack and turned away.

"My lady counts to see more of your mother's work," she said, preening herself.

"And so do you, sweetheart," he laughed over his shoulder.

CHAPTER IV

THE PORTUGALS

HUGH came slowly along the quay. Its day's work was over. A last line of packhorses clanked through the West Gate, bustled by porters making for tavern and home. Seamen were clambering back on board the hoys and from their craft rose smoke and the smells of supper. But Hugh was in no hurry. He looked at the West Gate. It would shut at dark, but there was time enough yet. He looked at the sky. The sun was down behind the rolling woodland, the water grey and on the full tide a boat plied here and there from the ships in the stream. Already lanterns glimmered pale on their masts. A carrack was moving slowly up to her anchors. The Portugal boat had shaken out one of her lateen sails.

Hugh sat down on a bollard to watch. You would think he must have been happy and proud, a boy who had made that day more than in all his life, more than his mother had ever possessed at once. Twenty-four marks, wealth to the hovel by God's House that was his home. By his reckoning, he had got ten times what his mother had been taught to think a fair price. And that was not the end. He put faith in the hints of more buying. These great folk should enable them to laugh at the stingy mercers of Hampton. Noble work for his first day's marketing! He was well aware of that, he saw very clearly what a change it should make in his life, yet he was in a sour and grumbling humour.

There might be trouble with the mayor and the merchant guild. He was not of the guild, he was not even the son

of a Hampton man, he had no right to sell in the town and Master Mayor and all the other mercers who had made their profit by his mother's wares would do what they could against him. A farthing for the mayor! The castle was not the town. My lady the constable's wife and De Roffa, the Lord Captain's man, should hold him against mayor and guild. Well, not my lady, maybe—hang her for a cold shrew—but De Roffa, he had blood in him, and some grudge of his own against Master Mayor, God bless him.

But it was poor work, after all, this peddling broideries. He had thought to like it better. Fie, to gain twenty marks, when he began to think how he could ever do that (holy saints, how long ago!) it seemed like winning heaven. But it was bleak dreary work, to cringe to a proud fool of a woman and bribe her serving-maid—pretty enough to kiss the wench, though—but then she had to be paid—bleak work! If the silly great folks were all like De Roffa, a man could like it well; if a man only had to do with men. But broideries must go to women. And the women——!

Even if a man could bear their silly pride, why, there was no thriving so. Twenty-four marks—yes, and how long before he made twenty marks again? His mother worked slow. He might sell all she could do and sell it nobly, it would not make them. He might have fresh meat in the pot to his desire, a new doublet at need—a joyous change of a surety—and yet they must be humble folk in a mean house—a sewing woman and a pedlar—nothing.

He looked over the dark water to the lights of the foreign ships and grunted. Ay, goodly ventures there. Riches came out of the sea. A cargo of Spain, a parcel of spices in the Venetian galleys, if a man had the handling of that, he could make a life to his will. If a man had the moon to sell!

He rose from his bollard and made slowly across the quay. A patter of light feet pursued him, a hand plucked at him.

"Boy, wait, I want you." He turned and saw in the dusk a little shape in cloak and hood and made out the face of Christine Du Pré.

"God save you, lady, you should not be roaming here. If your mother knew of it you will be beat and I shall be hanged."

"I do not care, not I. I want your honeysuckles."

Hugh chuckled. "In faith you are very right. But woe is me, your lady mother thinks nothing of them. You must tell her she was wrong. Come, let us be swift back to the castle or they will shut the gate against you."

"I do as I will. Jocelyn is on the gate and he watches for me. Come, give me the honeysuckle piece."

"Good faith, I would like well to see it on your pretty bosom. But my lady would not buy."

"Oh rogue. You have been richly paid."

"Cry you mercy. But the bare worth of what your lady mother took."

"You are not true. Marion said you were paid more than the worth of all, you were so hard with her. She said you might well give me the honeysuckles."

"Did she so? I thank her. She is a merry wench, your Marion. And I pray you, did she say you should run out alone into the night and beg of me?"

She struck him. "A rogue. A wicked rogue. I do not beg, I."

"No, faith. You are my lady's daughter," Hugh laughed. "Now speak me true, Christine. This is your own thought to follow after me now?"

She laughed. "Silly fellow, do you think I ask leave of any for what I do?"

"Send you fair, your mother is blessed in you. Look you now, dear heart. You are a great lord's daughter and have all things rich and I am a poor boy with nothing but my broideries to win bread for my mother and me and yet you come and beg of me my best. Is not that noble in you?"

She shuffled a foot on the stones, "I hate you," she said.

And Hugh laughed. "Amen, so be it." He fumbled in what was left of his pack. "See, here are the honey-suckles, Christine."

She peered at them through the dark. "Why do you give to me? I do not want them." But she took them.

"For my pleasure," Hugh said. "Come now, away to your castle. I must see you safe before I go to my house of mud."

She turned and pattered away and he strode behind. A white face looked back, a small voice said, "I have no need of you. Go." And she stumbled upon some sailors hurrying to the quay steps. One caught her up, plucked the hood from her face and peered at her and chuckled and they pressed upon her chattering. She screamed, and Hugh cried out, "Fools, fools, it is the constable's daughter," and thrust in among them. They struck him down, they muffled her head in her cloak and ran off with her.

Hugh staggered to his feet, looked about him, made for the West Gate, calling to the porter: "Alarm, brother, alarm! Portugals; they have taken the constable's daughter. Rouse the castle. Alarm!"

"St. Denis defend us!" The fat porter wheezed. "Portugals? My lord's daughter? Where be they gone? Hey, brother"—for Hugh was gone too. The porter peered after him into the night. "Here is work! Well now, what hath come of my horn?" He rolled into the gate-house.

Hugh ran across the quay. The Portuguese seamen were already at the steps tumbling into their boat. He jumped down among them as they shoved off calling "Stop, stop. You are mad. The alarm is given. The town is rising. They will man every ship in Hampton to follow you. God help you, gentles, you will all hang if this maid is the worse for you. Put her ashore and——"

There was a chatter in their own lingo while he spoke. Before he ended he was beaten down with an oar and lay dazed in the bottom of the boat while they rowed her out

into the stream. Still they chattered. It was an unknown tongue to him, mere noise, but as his wits began to come back to him he thought they were not of one mind, they were so loud and vehement, yet they rowed hard, and when at last the blare of the porter's horn tore through his throbbing head, harder they rowed and louder they jabbered.

The dark shore woke into shouting, the din of movement, a glimmer of lanterns. The castle bell clanged, a point of light gleamed high on the walls and the beacon blazed into flame. But the Portuguese, though their chatter fell to muttering, bent the faster to their oars. A hail came shrill across the water and they answered volubly. The boat bumped alongside the felucca, the chatter rose loud again. Hugh chose to be senseless. If he stirred it seemed to him he had the better chance of going overboard. He could do nothing by a fight, nothing more by talk. However the thing went, there was little hope. But he would not drown till he must.

They tossed him aboard the felucca like a log and like a log he rolled and lay. Then he opened his eyes. The felucca had a deck fore and aft. The long space between was full of cargo, covered with canvas, nearly as high as the deck. On that he had fallen and not far from him Christine was flung in a bundle, her cloak knotted over her head and her arms. The boat was tied up astern. The Portuguese were all hard at work breaking out the anchor, hoisting the huge lateen sails, driven by yells from the captain at the long tiller who would look back each moment to the busy land and turn again more furious to scream at them.

Hugh rolled to the bulwarks and lay still again. No one had eyes for him. He peered at the shore. It seemed to him that some of the little craft by the quay were shifting. If the Portugals had the Cornish hoys after them they might smart for their night's work. There were no sharper pirates on the seas than the Cornishmen. He made out a light drawing slowly away from the land.

But the felucca too was moving. They had broken out the anchor, the windlass was screaming, the sails swayed above him. The row boat astern made her tow rope taut with a splash and jumped after her. She had the tide, she had the wind abeam, a light breeze but steady and beneath her great spread of canvas she gathered way fast.

Hugh gazed through the dark. There was surely a hoy coming after them and more than one, a chain of lights on the water, but the felucca was going away. He told himself he was not sure of that, he was no sailor yet it was plain the Portuguese had their anxieties. They took no heed of their prisoners, they had crowded aft to watch the hoys and were debating vehemently. But Hugh allowed himself no hope. The English seamen jeered at the feluccas and their lateen rig as lubberly and unhandy, as well go to sea in a coffin, it was a proverb on the Hampton quays. But in the smooth water and light winds of Hampton river a felucca might run away from the sturdy English craft, he had seen it often enough. He could not tell what to hope. If the hoys did come up, the Portuguese would never let themselves be taken with their prisoners aboard. Christine and he would be dropped over the side to drown and the Portuguese swear they had never had them aboard, knew nothing of them. But if the felucca got safe away to sea, there was no guessing what would be the end of it for him. Christine—they would be gentle enough with her, they would sell her to the Moors, she would fetch her price too, she was so white. Her weight in silver, men said, the Moorish soldans would pay for a clean white virgin. More than one girl of the southern ports had gone that way. But himself? They might sell him for a galley slave if they thought him stout enough to fetch a price. Galley slaves went cheap, the sailors said, hardy men sold for a few ducats in Venice. It was as likely the Portugals would beat in his head and fling him to the Channel fish.

He wriggled stealthily along the bulwarks. The Portu-

guese were still clustered aft watching the chase and had reason. The chain of lights had become a broken line, a little squadron of hoys was spread out across the water and faintly shouts came to his ears. He could not tell whether they were gaining; it was plain that they incant to hold on. The felucca was running close to the western shore; she must stand away to the east to round Calshot Spit, he knew that much, they might come up on her then and cut her off; he could not be sure. No use to him if they did. The Portuguese would have him overboard first. He looked at the shore away on the starboard beam. It was not so far. If he dropped into the water he might make it. And leave Christine to find her own fortune. Well! The brat had made all the trouble, let her have it. But what welcome would there be for him in Hampton if he came back alone? Why, better be the mock of the town than lie dead.

Yet he had his own manner of pride. He would not endure to ruin Master Hugh Camoys, who had much to do with his life: who was a subtle deep fellow; who was not to be beaten so. A crew of beggarly Portugals to make an end of him! His head against all of theirs yet. . . . He had a plan. . . .

He plucked out his knife and cut half through the rope that held the foot of one of the great sails to the bulwarks, then slid aft. All was well. The Portuguese were still in anxious debate over the chasing hoys. He found the tackle of the mizzen sail, cut that near through and wriggled away to the starboard side and waited.

The felucca was running with the wind on her starboard beam. Little by little the cut ropes tore through and broke and the lateen sails flapping and crackling streamed out on the wind. Then the helm that was holding her against it turned her bows to the shore and before the captain could put the long tiller over she ran on the mud banks and brought up with more tackle breaking and a crash of the mizzen yard. Some of the crew were caught in it, some came scrambling forward. Hugh caught up

Christine and flung himself with her into the sea. The row boat which the felucca was towing lay bumping into her quarter. He made for it, he pushed the girl up into it and swam thrusting it off till he had his knife out again and cut the tow rope. Then he heaved himself over the stern and fumbled in the dark for oars. There were none aboard. He cursed and dropped into the water again and swam on holding by the boat, turning it to the shore.

Aboard the felucca was screaming chaos. Then out of the din came spikes and stones and arrows. But the boat, low in the black water, was a bad mark and Hugh no mark at all. Though the water was torn about him, and once and again the boat was hit, he swam on till his feet found the mud and he floundered out of range, hauling the boat after him.

And the rage of the felucca rent the night and the Cornish hoys closed upon her.

CHAPTER V

A LADY LOVED A SWINE

HUGH sat on the gunwale of the boat and his breath came in sobs. He was mud to his waist, his legs heavy as lead, there was no strength in him. The boat was fast aground, but much mud yet lay between him and dry land. Out of the boat came muffled cries. He was not moved thereby.

"You!" he said as his breath came back. "What ha' you to cry for?" But feeling a little better, he reached for her and loosed the knots of her wet cloak and revealed a little white face.

Hands clutched at him, the face came very close. "Boy," she said, "yes, it is you, the boy of the broideries. Say it is you!" she stroked him.

"Woe is me, it is me," Hugh grunted.

"Where are we?" she looked round the dark lonely shore.

"Stuck in the mud, twixt Calshot Point and Cadland Creek, I thank you."

"But those wicked rogues on the ship?"

"Pray for them, lady. They have their own troubles." He pointed out across the water to the lights of the hoys converging on the murmur where the felucca lay.

"We are safe from them? Come, take me back to the castle." Then Hugh gave forth a short, scornful chuckle. "Ah, do not do that," she cried. "What is it? I do not like this place. Come, boy, why do you wait here?"

"God requite you," Hugh exploded. "Like it! Not I! It is you who brought us to this pleasaunce. Wait!

So please you, I wait because I can no more. Take you to the castle! Take you to heaven, it is easier."

"Oh, how you scold!" she whispered. "Do not be so sharp with me. Take me back, I pray you. Dear boy," she smoothed his arm.

He plucked it away, he stood up squelching in the mud. "How long are your legs?" he said. "Tuck up your gown. Fic, you are but a sparrow who should be a heron, you will be clogged in the mire. What a thing is a girl! Climb on my back. Holy St. Christopher, speed me fair. Do not choke me, girl."

He floundered on with her, panting and groaning till at last his feet found tussocks of firm ground and he pulled her arms open and let her fall.

She wept. "Oh, how you hurt me, you rogue. Oh, I am cold."

"So am not I, I thank you." He jerked her to her feet. "Come, you shall be warm enough," and he strode on dragging her after him.

"I am tired, I am tired," she whimpered.

"And tired am I, by your grace. And my good bed in Hampton town is ten mile away. And I would not sleep here in the mire lest I die of an ague. March, girl, march."

"Ten miles!" she gasped.

"Why, you should have thought of that before you ran away with the Portugals. When a maid leaves her mother it is ever a long way back."

"Oh!" she tore her hand from his and stood still. "You are a knave, you are a beast."

Hugh strode away. He was on heather that sprang beneath his feet and the worst of the mud was brushed from them, he went lightly.

A cry of terror followed him through the dark, the girl rushed after him and arrived in a heap embracing his knees. "Oh, boy, boy, do not leave me," she sobbed. "What shall I do?"

He dragged her up. "March, march," he said and she went on, hanging to his hand and crying quietly.

Where they were, he knew little more than she, the heaths were so wide and bare on that side the water. He was content to go straight for Hampton. Of finding a village or even a house he had no hope in the dark, for that barren ground nourished few people, but after a mile or more of plodding he did discover some mass rising in the gloom and made for it. It was no great size, it shrank as they drew near and they found it the remains of a stack of last year's bracken.

"Our Lady be praised! Here is bed and blanket," he chuckled.

The girl felt it. "Fern!" she said with disgust.

"In with you," Hugh said, burrowing a hole for her.

"What, shall I lie there?"

"Ay, and lie warm. Better folk than you have no better bed each night and all. In with you and thank God."

She whimpered, but she let him thrust her in. "Boy, you will not go away?" She clung to him.

"No, faith," he laughed. "I would not go another yard if the devil were after me. I sleep in your ladyship's bed this night."

She held her breath to listen till she was sure that he was lying down, too; she turned to feel for him and sighed and slept.

The short summer night was not enough for them. The sun was high when she waked and she was the first awake and tossed and turned often in the crackling fern before she had him awake too. He groaned, he stretched, he yawned till his dirty face split and vanished into a red gulf. "Blessed Virgin bless us," he said and yawned again. "What irks you that you wriggle?" He stretched himself luxuriously in the bracken.

She tossed it off her; she slid to the ground. "Fie, you are a sluggard," she cried, dusting herself. "Up with you and let us be gone. I am so hungry."

"And that would not matter if I were not so thirsty," Hugh mumbled, still stretching. He rolled to the ground,

looked about him with heavy eyes, took off his cap and knelt in the heather.

The girl looked at him qucerly and when he rose : " Do you always say your prayers ? " she said with contempt. " I hope you prayed for breakfast."

" For my daily bread "—he said it in Latin. " And that your sins should be forgiven, lady."

" Oh, I thank you ; are you a priest ? "

" Alas, I am not yet worthy," said Hugh meekly.

She stared at him and then laughed. " If you knew how dirty you are you would not be so solemn."

" Quoth the pot to the kettle," said Hugh.

" Oh, I do hate you," she cried.

" And that is a sin. And hot words boil no porridge. Come, child."

Thirsty, hungry, dirty, they trudged on over the heath, and the girl was flagging before they came on a lonely hut, the home of one of the masterless men, who lived by fishing and fowling along the creeks and the fern litter and sand their donkeys carried from the moor. By the door a woman sat plaiting a basket. Hugh came to her with his hat in his hand. " Please you, mistress, we be Hampton folk who lost our way on the heath last night and go hungry. I pray you spare us a morsel of breakfast."

She looked at him with the keen hard eyes of a woman who had little and needed it all. " God help you, here is nothing. We be poor folk, my master."

Hugh laughed. " Do I look rich, mistress ? But I do not beg. I can pay you a silver penny for a bowl of porridge between us two. See, my sister is faint."

She went into the hut and came out with a hunch of rye bread and a pitcher of goat's milk. So they ate and drank while she asked them how they came on the heath so far from Hampton, and Hugh told her that a ship's captain had taken them sailing to put them ashore where they might walk back to the town, but he or they miscounted the time and they were benighted and wandered hither and thither.

"Her mother will let you hear of it, my master," the woman chuckled, looking at the girl.

"I fear it, I promise you," Hugh said ruefully. "Look now. I see an ass there. Let her ride on it to the ferry and I will leave Jenny ass with the ferryman and here is a silver shilling to pay for all."

The woman's eyes sparkled. It was a rare good price. But she would not confess it. "You to have the ass! I dare not. God knows what my man would say. But mistress is a dainty piece"; she stroked the girl's golden plaits. "Kiss me, sweeting," which Christine yielded with the worst grace. "Fie, you need not be coy. I have no beard o' my chin. Well, you shall have the ass, you are so little and white."

So they marched off with Christine on donkey-back and were hardly out of carshot of the hut before she cried out: "Plague on you, why did you let her kiss me?" She rubbed her face at the memory.

"God send your ladyship no worse kisses."

"Look how you go about to be clever! There was no use in all that tale. If you had but told her I am the lord constable's daughter she would have given me all she had."

"And never kissed you, she would not dare defile your ladyship! But she might have played us a trick. There are wild folk out here in the marshes, and some of them might keep Christine du Pré till they could sell her well. I cannot tell. The woman may be honest enough. But if she knows nothing, she will do no harm."

Christine tossed her head. "Fie, what a coward you are!" she said.

"You have cause to say so," Hugh nodded.

And after a minute, "I said it to hurt you, boy," she smiled. "Are you angry?"

"Faith, no, dear heart. I like it very well."

"I think you are a dear, brave fellow," she announced. "The bravest in the world." To which he made no answer. "Boy, you did not doubt I know that?"

He laughed. "I know you know nothing about me, lady."

"Do I not! I know what you have done. You are my champion, Hugh. You are most bold and brave. Like a knight in a romance. Like Sir Roland or Sir Launcelot of the Lake."

Hugh made round eyes at her. "Look what a breakfast does!" said he. "While she was empty, she had no word for me but a bad word. Now she is full of bread and milk, she is merry with me, she is kind, she will kiss my hand and worship."

"Sir Hugh," she said softly, with a gurgling laugh.

"Sir Hugh—of the Ass," said he.

She would not be chilled. "Well, sir, the Lord Christ rode on an ass," she said.

"Holy saints guard your tongue!" Hugh was shocked. "What like is that to you or me?"

She laughed. "Oh, boy, you are quaint. A holy fellow! Why, then, here are you, a knight-errant, bringing back your lady that you have delivered from the infidels. I vow we are in a romance."

"Oh, very like a romance," said Hugh. "Only there were no infidels, for the Portugals are good Christian rogues, and I am no knight but a poor pedlar, and you—you will not be a lady of romance when your mother has you again."

"In faith I will," she cried. "I will always love you, boy. Why do you mock at yourself? You are noble and gallant. Look, where should I be now if you had not broken aboard that ship to save me?"

"None so fearful as me, I promise you."

"You! That is very like! You had but to stay ashore and be safe and I was sped. But you ventured for me."

"God ha' mercy, lady, I have my living to make. I am a poor widow's son. If I could bring you off, my lord your father should pay me well. So quaking I went. I pray you see me paid."

She was pale. She turned her head away from him.
And Hugh began to mutter a song :

There was a lady loved a swine :

"Honey!" said she

"Grumph," said he.

And in this manner they came to Cracknor hard.

CHAPTER VI

REWARD OF VALOUR

IN the castle of Southampton there was dismay and anxious conference and many voices.

When the hoys came up with the felucca, the Cornishmen boarded her and demanded the girl child, their Lady Christine, to which the Portuguese made answer swearing by many saints that they had no child among them nor ever had. The Cornishmen then cursed them for pirates and put them aboard the hoys in guard, and rummaged the felucca and found nothing in her but cargo. At this no Cornishman can have felt surprise. They knew the business of the sea too well. They would never have been caught in foreign waters with kidnapped folk still aboard. They stood by the felucca, got her off when the tide turned and towed her back as their prize, remarking that it was an ill wind which brought nobody good.

By dawn they were hailing Hampton quay with the news that they had the ship but not the maid. John Gravell of Golant bade tie the Portugals two and two and lauded them and marched them up to the castle. A desperate father and mother questioned him fiercely. Captain Gravell would not make a guess what the Portugals had done with the child. He had the rogues there for my lord constable to try them. In the wan morning light they were brought into the hall and the constable stormed at them, and they whined in their broken English that they know nothing of his child and called all heaven to witness they were innocent men. Then Captain Gravell said that he had known a rope round a man's head bring the truth out,

and the constable bade my lady be gone and called for a rope and the Provost.

But my Lord Warwick came with De Roffa into the hall and stayed this. For Warwick had to say something grave and kind to my lady and ask how things had gone, and when they heard what was doing De Roffa shrugged and Warwick shook his head and sat down by the constable and spoke in his ear. "Good faith, Sir Ralph, my heart is with you in this. But I would have you wait awhile before you put them to the torture. They cannot escape you, you have them fast."

"I must know what has come to my child."

"Ay, so you must and shall if you have to tear it out of them. But I pray you, go about it more subtly. See, we have no assurance these fellows ever took her."

Sir Ralph could only stare at him. My lady cried out. He was mocking them. He was cruel, Christine was gone.

"Ay, who saw her go?" said De Roffa gruffly. "Where the devil is the boy who gave the alarm? Let us have him up."

So they marched the wretched Portuguese away to bread of affliction and water of affliction and sent out into the town to find the boy. The porter of the West Gate was brought and could not tell what boy it was or what became of him. Then Master Mayor, smarting because the constable had not asked his help first or last, thrust himself into the castle hall to declare that the town knew nothing of the matter, and for his part he believed but little of it. At which the constable stormed while De Roffa looked sideways. "I beg your patience, Sir Ralph," said Warwick gently. "Master Mayor, this is sure, that the child is gone from us. What is it you will not believe?" Why, the mayor did not believe that the boy who gave the alarm was any Hampton boy; he did not believe that the alarm was honest, that the Portugals had ever taken the child. For no Hampton boy would be on the quay so late, and if he were a Hampton boy Master Mayor would know

of him, knowing all Hampton like his shirt. And where was the boy? Master Mayor, to tell his mind, had no doubt the alarm against the Portugals was a trick, and some private enemies of my lord constable had made off with his daughter. He smoothed his gown and smiled.

So did De Roffa. "This is a subtle fellow, a deep fellow," said he.

"Enemies, sirrah!" the constable cried. "What enemies have I?"

The mayor looked down his nose. "In sooth, my lord, I cannot tell. That is something too high for me," he smiled, and shook his head. "But, by my faith, so I judge the matter."

The constable looked at Warwick with wild eyes and dashed back his chair. "Do you hear him, my lord?"

"I know none who is your enemy," said Warwick gently. "But let him tell us his mind."

"Come, my master," said De Roffa; "are there any in Hampton Town that wish my lord ill?"

That was not answered, for Christine ran in and after her, slow and sheepish, came Hugh.

Mother and father rushed upon their child, crying her name.

De Roffa rose, too. He tapped the mayor on the shoulder. "Here is your boy, my master," he smiled. "And a boy of Hampton, I think."

"A naughty fellow, sir," the mayor scowled. "A known rogue. Sirrah, come you here."

"Peace, man, peace," Warwick flung over his shoulder. He was listening to the story Christine poured out. She left out the honeysuckle embroidery; she swept on to the Portuguese and their boat.

Captain John Gravell slapped his leg. "So it was the Portugals," he chuckled.

The tale lost nothing in Christine's mouth and when it was ended Warwick laughed. "Fair lady, you have found a right gallant knight. Come hither, boy. What are you?"

"So please you, my lord, I am a poor widow's son that sells broideries."

"By St. Peter, I think I know one could find you better work." He looked at De Roffa, but De Roffa pulled his long lips and was silent.

"By your good leave," Captain Gravell thrust forward. "Here is what the maid hath not told us. How came they Portugals to run aground? They was making a good course enough.* Do you know what brought them round, my lad?"

"I cut their tackle, master," Hugh grinned.

"Look you now!" The Cornishman turned to the constable in an exultation which he found was not shared. "You come to Captain John Gravell, my lad," he said defiantly. "I will be blithe to have you. You be fit for a pretty mariner."

But Christine cried out, "He is not for that. My father, he hath saved me most nobly," which gave the constable no pleasure.

"By my faith, the lady says well." Warwick made her a smiling bow. "Why, Sir Ralph, this is the best deed I have heard for a year and a day. It is my mind to beg this boy of you if you have no better for him."

"I thank you, my lord," said the constable haughtily. "I pay my own debts. What is your name, boy?"

"Hugh Camoys, to please you."

"You have earned my favour, Hugh Camoys. There is a place for you in my household. You may be among my squires if you do worthily."

Hugh drew back, looked about him as though he sought help and mumbled. "I humbly thank your lordship. 'Tis too much for me. I have no skill for it. I am a poor clumsy fellow. I should shame you. It is not for me. Please your lordship to give me some little thing."

"Why, what would you have?" the constable frowned.

Hugh came nearer again, meek and smiling anxiously. "Of your grace, my lord, if you would make me of the guild merchant that I might be free to sell my broideries in Hampton."

Warwick laughed. "Here is your knight, pretty lady." The mayor made noises. The constable looked disgust.

"Fie, fie, do not heed him, my father," Christine cried. "He is shy and modest. Let him wear your colours, I pray you."

"Good faith, I am not fit, my lord," Hugh made haste to answer in a dolorous whine. "I am a poor boy who have no spirit for arms: I am too rude for a noble house. Let me do my tradings, let me be of the guild merchant and I will ever be your faithful bedesman."

"Go your ways, have it so." The constable turned from him in contempt. "Master Mayor, write his name on your guild roll, this Hugh Camoys."

"Nay, my lord, by your leave, by your leave"—the mayor held up his hands in horror. "This cannot be. The boy may not come into our guild. He is no guildsman's son. He is not even Hampton born. It is against our charter to enrol him. The King himself (God save him!) could not do it."

"There is for you, my Lord Constable!" Warwick laughed.

"Sirrah, who made you bold to give laws to the King?" the constable was majestically wroth. "Do you think to defy me? I will teach you the King rules in Hampton Town. I know your charters and, by St. Denis, I will have you keep them. There is no beggar in the land but may come into your guild merchant if he pays fine. Set down this lad's name on your roll and my chamberlain shall pay you his dues. Get you gone."

The mayor rumbled, the mayor made a formal reverence, the mayor stalked out.

"Faith, my lord, you keep sullen horses to ride in Hampton," Warwick laughed. "Here is a pother to get a boy a shop." He rose and looked at Hugh who stood obsequious, smiling, and took him by the ear. "And you—you would rather buy and sell than live by the sword. A mean rogue." He turned away and De Roffa followed him.

Hugh approached the constable and knelt. "God save your lordship. I humbly thank you."

"You have chosen basely. Go," the constable said. And Hugh rose and made a bow towards Christine. But she would not look at him.

He slunk out, and in the courtyard was hailed by Osbern Shirley, splendid in the red and white of Warwick's household. "Why, Hugh, what is this, lad? It is you that brought the girl off? Here is noble work! Give you joy, brother. Come, tell me how it went." And as short and dull as he could make it Hugh told the tale. "By our Lady, I ever said you had stuff in you." Osbern clapped him on the shoulder. "Old Hugh! Well done, my brother. This is rare fortune. The constable will make a man of you."

"My lord hath been most generous," said Hugh meekly. "He puts me in the guild merchant."

Osbern's delight froze into amazement. "The guild merchant? Now that is churlish, that is base."

"He offered me to be his squire. But what should I do as a great lord's squire, Osbern?" Hugh looked down at his ungainly, shabby shape. "I asked for the guild merchant. I must e'en buy and sell for my bread."

"By my faith, you have a low spirit," said Osbern.

De Roffa came swinging across the courtyard and heard it and laughed. "A low spirit? Ay, that has he. Very right, my sweetheart. He will be selling his broideries when Osbern is a golden knight. Here, sirrah. My Lord Warwick sends you this guerdon"—he slipped a purse into Hugh's hand—"for he says that you are a bold, subtle fellow, and my lord constable dealt you mean measure. Away with you."

He took Osbern by the arm. "My popinjay, you heard nothing of that," he said. "Forget it."

CHAPTER VII

MUCH CRY AND LITTLE WOOL

HUGH sat sucking at plums stewed in honey, which his mother believed him to love, while that mother told Father Nicholas what a wonderful boy he was.

"It is true," said the friar. "He is surely the marvel of our town. Yet the beer is small." He looked into his pot and he looked with a beckoning eye at Hugh. But Hugh still sucked his plums and the friar sighed. "They say that the constable gave you a purse of a hundred marks, my son?" he suggested.

"But it is not so, my father," said Hugh meekly and conceiving he had eaten plums enough to satisfy his mother sat back from the table beside her.

"No, faith," said she, putting her hand on his arm. "My Hugh would take no money for saving a maid's body."

"Pride, mistress, pride"—the friar shook his head. "Look you, shall I not take money for saving a maid's soul? By mine Order, that will I. 'Tis Christian duty. So my lord gave you nothing, my son?"

"Only this, to be a guildsman. Which is a great thing for such as I am."

"He came cheaply off." The friar munched a salt onion. "I did not think any man would do that who dealt with Hugh Camoys."

"Why should you say so?" the mother cried.

"And Master Mayor," the friar chuckled. "Peace be with you, mistress. I love the boy well." He drank deep.

"So 'tis a merchant of Hampton and not a poor brother of St. Francis you will be, my son? God forgive you the choice. He will not be surprised."

"Alas, father, I must do as I can. I am not fit for your holy life. Let me go my way."

"Let you! God ha' mercy, whoever could stay you? You ha' gone your way since you were weaned."

"Fie, Father Nicholas!" the mother flamed out again. "He has done my will all his days. He has never stood against me."

"Give thanks to our Lady you can say so," the friar grinned. "Oh, it is a good wise son. He was born fortunate. Never have I found a boy who knew so well what he could do and what not."

It was just what Hugh wanted to believe of himself. He was tempted into a boyish smile. But he said: "Oh, my father, you make too much of me."

"Not a doit, not a doit. You count and you measure, you will thrive. But he who makes no reckoning with man or God, he who sees nothing too high or too hard for him, he is the great one. So will you never be. Well, let us praise God for it. The time comes when you will feed the poor friar on peacock and swan and Spanish wine, not onions and small beer"—he looked into the pot and drained the dregs—"small beer!" said he, and since they offered him no more rolled out of the door with a "Peace be with you."

Eleanor Camoys tossed her head. "The friar is envious of you, my son."

"Not he. He only thinks and thinks," said Hugh carelessly. "Mother, could you work me a piece with honeysuckle and butterflies? I would give it to my Lady Christine."

"But surely"—she kissed him—"that is gentle, Hugh."

From this time life was a little more genial for Hugh Camoys. He had breeches and a doublet which covered his large loose frame and, by the tailor's evidence, looked as well as any clothes could on a fellow who bore himself

so clumsily. Hugh liked himself in them: they were of good Flemish broadcloth and black, such as sober old fellows wore. His mother strove to put him into a red camelot cloak, but he evaded that by getting one for her. He was cautious not to make a show, for which indeed he had no taste. That the two of them should go clad in comfort and have butcher's meat to eat was enough for him. But also he desired to avoid ill-will. No man in Hampton must be able to say he was flaunting his good fortune till it was much more firmly established: he must still go humble and obsequious: his sudden entry into the guild merchant, advancement such as no man had seen, would serve him little if it raised up enemies all about him.

This fear indeed he found deceitful. The mayor was all that he expected of Master Robert Aylward, arrogant, menacing, spiteful, and some of the guild took their cue from Master Mayor. But most of the men of substance made a joke of the poor widow's brat setting up for a merchant. Hugh was much obliged to them. The rest of the town laughed and wished him well. It came into Hugh's mind that the good folk of Hampton might not be so hard or so mean as he had thought them.

But he was not encouraged to do anything rash. He knew very well that he had yet nothing secure. The prices he made on his lucky day in the castle would not be made often. That money he had brought safe away from the adventure with the Portugals, he had Warwick's purse, too (another stroke of luck that would not come again), call it a hundred marks in all. It was something to trade upon now that he had the right to trade, but he had only his mother's broderies to trade with, and if he might now win something like the worth of his mother's fine work, though she stitched all day and half the night, she could not furnish enough to make him busy or their household rich, and he had an ambition that she should not toil as her wont was. With some pains he persuaded her to bring in other women to work under her orders, and the embroideries of the little house were multiplied, and the mercers

and tailors of Hampton bought them and commanded more. It began to be common talk that this Camoys work was nonpareil.

So in a modest way Hugh throve. One thing only went awry. When he took the new honeysuckle piece to the castle, he could have speech of nobody but my lady's waiting-woman, and must needs leave the stuff in her hand with his humble duty to the Lady Christine. No word of thanks came back to him nor any other word. Whether Christine or the waiting-woman wore the stuff he was left to guess. It was plain that the family of Du Pré meant to have done with Hugh Camoys.

But Sir Giles de Roffa had not forgotten him. To the little house came Osbern Shirley and gave orders that a saddle-cloth should be embroidered for my Lord Warwick and a surcoat for De Roffa, which Hugh received with gratitude as meek as if Osbern were himself the patron, and asked humbly in what manner he would have the things wrought.

Osbern had become perfectly the swaggering squire of a great man.

"Go to, that is your trade, not mine," he laughed. "I am no needle-woman, good lad. Show me the thing when it is done, I will tell you if it is fit for a knight. What, you rogue"—he looked round the little room where two girls sat sewing under the eye of Eleanor Camoys—"you are thriving. Does Hugh teach the wenches, mistress? By the ragged staff, here is fortune!" and out he went.

"Osbern is grown a foolish fellow," said Eleanor Camoys with a toss of her head.

"There is no guile in Osbern," Hugh smiled. "Come, mother, what shall we give these great ones?" And they fell eagerly to planning the surcoat and the saddle-cloth. But he was well aware that there might be guile in De Roffa. That man only of all the men he had met puzzled him.

Before the things were finished came De Roffa himself, but he came in the twilight when the sewing-women were

gone. He desired to see saddle-cloth and surcoat and examined them long and critically. But in the end he was well pleased and paid a price that amazed Eleanor Camoys and satisfied her son. "And how goes it with Master Hugh, the merchant?" he grinned.

"Sir, I humbly thank you. By your favour, I have thriven some little."

"I warrant you"—the lean face grew grave—"you will thrive. But it is your mother is the lucky one."

Eleanor Camoys was delighted with that. "Oh, sir, I know it well. Hugh is a kind boy to me."

De Roffa grinned, De Roffa stared at her and grinned again. "Well. Come, walk with me, good son"; and he took Hugh out into the dark street. "So your trade goes well?" he began. "The mercers take your broideries now?"

Hugh made answer discreetly, telling something less than the truth, and De Roffa surprised him by shrewd questions that spoke a knowledge of trade and a curious interest, which were designed to make little of the new prosperity. So Hugh became very content with his fortunes: and the mercers treated him fairly and well: and there was no envy nor malice against him in the guild: and Master Mayor was nowise his enemy.

"God bless you, you are all honey," De Roffa chuckled. "So you want no better fortune than to sell broideries?"

"It is my trade and a good trade, by your favour."

De Roffa shrugged. "Well enough for a little man," he said. "Well enough while Hampton thrives. How if Hampton folk go poor? There is no market then for Master Hugh's broideries."

"In faith, my lord, the town is not so thriving now. You should know that."

"I, rogue? What do I know of your trading?"

"Pardon, my lord. There is no wine comes into Hampton now. It was the French wine made us rich."

"You are rich enough yet. While the wool goes out

your quays are busy and your merchants fat, but how if there is no more wool going oversea? "

"God forbid, my lord!" Hugh cried.

"God? He does not deal in wool, I think, though the bishops and holy church be great wool factors. But the King may forbid, Master Hugh, the King and his minions."

"Fie, fie, it cannot be," Hugh cried. "What should we poor Hampton folk do then? "

De Roffa chuckled. "Ay, you would raise the fiend then, I doubt you not. But go to, your constable is loyal to the King and very loyal is your mayor and they work together like brothers. They will hold you down."

"Holy St. Francis!" Hugh was shocked. "We be all the King's lieges, there needs none to keep us down. But I pray you why should our lord the King do hurt to our poor trade? "

"Why? God mend your wits, do you ask a reason for what the King does? Say one of his dainty lords hath a quarrel with the Flemings or bears a grudge against the flockmasters or you southron merchants. I cannot tell. I am no Court lapdog. This is sure, the King puts a ban on the wool-ships."

"But that is death to honest merchants," Hugh gasped.

"Say you so?" De Roffa laughed. "Who cares for that at Court? There be greedy minions who would like well to make a glut of wool in England that they may buy cheaper now and sell dear when they open the ports again."

"A cruel, wicked design!" Hugh stood still. "You mock me, my lord. I will not believe it."

"Look you, lad, I speak what I know, who stand by my Lord Warwick's side. And he hath a kindly favour for all you good lads of the southern ports. Look you, I give you warning and you shall tell me at Michaelmas if I speak true. I choose you out because I judge you shrewd and wary. Now tell me somewhat, Master Hugh. Will your Hampton folk take the thing meekly? "

"Good faith, my lord, who can be meek when his livelihood is taken? It is my thought they will not bear it."

"Even though Master Mayor and Master Constable bid them lie still?" De Roffa grinned.

"Alas, my lord, I fear there will be no peace in Hampton."

"By the ragged staff, I blame no man who fights for his bread," said De Roffa. "Fare you well, boy. I go with my lord to Court. I look to have a letter from Master Hugh how it goes in Hampton. I think he knows how to serve me." He pinched Hugh's ear.

"Oh, with my whole heart," Hugh said. "But indeed, my lord, you set me a puzzle."

"Why, what now?"

"I pray you why did you say it was my mother was the lucky one?"

De Roffa stared at him in the gloom. "Oh, that!" he said in a moment. "Why, child, because she hath a craft which is her joy."

"And have you not, my lord?" said Hugh meekly.

De Roffa laughed. "Go, you are a rogue. You will know what I mean if you live."

Hugh went slowly through the dark alleys. He had no doubt at all that De Roffa's tale was true. It was not a new thing that trade in this or that should be forbidden by the King's command. That the King was weak and ruled by favourites had been common talk as long as Hugh remembered. The nature and training of Hugh Camoys inclined him to a low opinion of any man's honesty, merchant or courtier or King.

What puzzled him was what De Roffa stood to gain by telling him or what De Roffa wanted of him. He had long made up his mind that De Roffa had no liking for the mayor. He suspected that between my Lord Warwick and the Constable of Hampton there was no love. He did not forget that Warwick and De Roffa had smiled upon the quarrel between mayor and constable. So he concluded to believe that Warwick wanted turmoil in Hampton and in particular turmoil over the ban on wool. The function of Hugh Camoys was to make discontent and

foster it and let my Lord Warwick be advised how far it would go.

Why then, Warwick must be arrayed against the King or the King's minions—all one. There had been whispers of that before, and indeed every great lord who was not among the favourites was supposed a rebel at heart. But Warwick, who owned many a shire, who was Captain of Calais, had power enough to content any man and had lain quiet. If he decided that the time was come to make a grasp at the King and the governance of the realm there would be mighty work. And Hugh was chosen to play a part in it! He grew warm. Hugh Camoys employed upon a great lord's plot, Hugh Camoys helping to master the King!

But after all, what was Hugh Camoys to make by it? He went very sober and solemn to bed.

It seemed strange to find in the morning that Hampton was nowise changed. Unaware of danger, unconscious that Hugh Camoys was the minister of the great, Hampton folk went blithely about their business. And days passed and Warwick was still a guest at the castle and no news came. The saddle-cloth and the surcoat were finished and taken to De Roffa, but he was not to be seen. When Warwick and his company did ride out of the North Gate, a splendid show tossing money to the crowd, they left the town untroubled.

The summer's crop of wool was shorn and packed. The teams of the flockmasters laboured beneath their packs from the Wessex Downs and the Cotswolds towards Hampton. Already the wool-houses in Bugle Street were busy. The galleys of Venice lay empty for their freight, and broad-beamed Flemish caravels were coming in. Quays and taverns were thronged and noisy with strange tongues, and in and about the wool-houses and the Weigh House merchants and shipmasters and flockmasters chattered. In this bustle Hugh moved zealously, but he could hear nothing of any threats of embargo on the trade: all men were greedy and hopeful: and he sold his small stock of broideries handsomely.

The thing came upon Hampton like a wintry storm in harvest. With yeomen and trumpets the constable marched out from the castle, and before St. Michael's Church and on the quays was read a proclamation of the King's gracious pleasure that no wool should be sent out of his realm of England. The King's lieges in Hampton had difficulty in understanding what he said and then in believing that what he said he could mean. A growing, buzzing crowd followed the constable's array to hear each new reading and when the last was done and yeomen and constable drew off to the castle, Master Mayor was beset by an angry company, flockmasters, foreign shipmasters, even his own familiars, demanding what this accursed ordinance was and what they should do and why he had given them no warning and how long he had known of it. To all this he had nothing to say but that it was the King's will and he was Mayor of Hampton and he was not to be so entreated, and he shut himself up in the guildhall with the aldermen while the town seethed. Each man of substance must tell his neighbour that it was not to be borne and he was ruined, and the poorer folk gathered here and there asking what was to come of it, and the foreign mariners began to riot, sacking taverns and cook-shops. Then the richer folk saw present danger and gave over their grumbling and sent to the castle for help, and the constable's yeomen came out and broke some heads and took some prisoners and made peace and set a guard on every seaward gate.

So the peace was kept in Hampton. Such is the nature of man that the very merchants who had asked help of the castle were not satisfied nor grateful. When they had slept on it they discovered it was a wicked thing the constable should mount guards in their free town and they beset the mayor and were urgent that he should go to the constable and in the name of law and charters demand that the yeomen should march back into the castle. The mayor, refusing to be taught his duty, found some supporters, made much delay and inflamed resentment, but was compelled

at last by weight of numbers to concede that he would go and advise with my lord constable. When he came back his arrogance was fortified. My lord constable, he announced, had given his knightly word the liberties of Hampton should suffer nothing, but while so many foreign ships lay in the river his yeomen would guard the gates to maintain the King's peace and the King's ordinance.

Since this last was what the wool merchants least desired it brought them no comfort and they parted from the mayor stormily. Thereafter Hampton was split into factions and turbulent. Those who lived by the export of wool, not only the rich wool factors but their journeymen and their porters and the folk that had the custom of the flockmasters and the foreign mariners, all these were loud against the mayor and the constable and the King. Others who were not hurt stood loyally for law and order. There were turbulent crowds and haranguing and flinging of mud and stones and cudgel work.

In this Hugh Camoys, spite of De Roffa's commission, saw no need to take part. To be of either side might make the other mark him an enemy. The crop of quarrel and discontent was large enough without his help. But he decided that he might well have the credit for it. A letter to the noble knight Giles de Roffa relating it as fostered by the guile of his poor servant and bedesman went to London in the gown of a grey friar.

But Hugh was ill at ease. Half the town or more than half might be learning to hate the King and his minions and ready to hail my Lord Warwick as saviour of the realm. In the meantime no one was buying broderies or like to buy. No man was buying anything but food and drink. These turmoils were death to honest trade. And he could not foresee any end to them. There were not many weeks left for shipping the wool crop. Soon the autumn gales would be on them and the winter and the foreign ships must sail away empty, leaving the Hampton merchants with a year's wool in store and not a mark to share between them and the flockmasters. A merry winter! Oh, there must be

great profit in the embargo somewhere, as De Rosla had said, for rich rogues, for fellows who could afford to wait. But a poor lad living from hand to mouth, a year of bad trade would break him.

Master Mayor, now, and his friends, why were they so mighty loyal? Devil doubt them, they counted on buying mountains of wool for a pittance when the ships had sailed, to sell it when the foreigners came again in the spring hungrily ready to pay any price. A good world for the rich!

He began to frequent the taverns of the shipmasters that he might learn what they had in mind. It was hard work. He could make nothing of Flemish, not much of Italian, though he had heard it about him since he could walk. When Fleming met Venetian eavesdropping was more profitable, for they used a lingo made up of so many languages a boy who knew Hampton quays could pick up the sense. But only the small fry were loud and frank and boisterous. The captains of great ships had little to say, and used to each other a wary courtesy, asking no questions, telling nothing of their private purposes. Hugh came soon to believe they had none, they saw no remedy for their ill fortune. There were two, plainly accounted leaders, Contarini, the admiral of the Venetian galleys, a stately man with the melancholy beauty of a saint and hair like a golden halo, and Jan Hooydonk, a squat Fleming of little twinkling pig's eyes. Contarini said openly that he was weary of English tricks and the English voyage and would come no more to northern seas. Hooydonk sat and drank and chuckled and said never a word of any matter but good living and women. Yet it was Hooydonk who closed their tavern against Hugh, turning upon him one night as he followed them out with a "Hoo, younker, is that you again?" He linked his arm affectionately with Hugh's. "That is not healthy for you, to come to hear us drink. That is a mariner's house, see you, and what are you? Holy Mother, a landsman! Do not come among us, younker. That is not wholesome. You will be seasick.

There is a mess! I do not wish that, you see? Go." He pushed Hugh away, nodding and chuckling, and waddled on to his ship.

Hugh took his advice. The jowl of Jan Hooydonk suggested that he was not a man to be defied. But if he threatened penalties for spying there might be something to spy upon. What it could be, Hugh cudgelled his brains to no purpose. The Fleming could not hope to get his cargoes secretly, with guards on the quays and the town in such a fever that every man was watching what his neighbour did. Yet something he must hope which argued him a bold fellow and subtle.

Not many days after a large and ruddy man made the High Street resound his wrath. He issued from the mayor's house with the mayor hanging on his sleeve and voluble in unwonted entreaty and he cursed the mayor in a voice that might be heard upon the walls. Even in the quarrels of those days such candour was uncommon; it drew an eager crowd. "Ay, come and look at him, you Hampton folk, here is your rogue mayor," he roared and dragged Master Aylward most unwilling out into the street. "Look at him well: he sucks your blood. He will have a ban upon wool, he will maintain it. Do you know why? So your mayor can buy up all for a pittance and hold it in his hand. A withholder, an usurer, a rogue! Look at him: you starve that he may bloat. He would have my crop of me five marks the pack and calls it a favour, so please ye." He turned upon the mayor and shook him. "You leeche, you shall not feed on me. Bleed Hampton folk's blood, there is none of mine for your fat belly. I load my teams again and go home." He flung the mayor into the crowd. "Here is your mayor, give you joy," and strode off thrusting folks aside to make his furious way.

"God have mercy," said Hugh Camoys meekly, "who is this that makes so bold?" and learnt that he was Tom Cardonell out of Cotswold, the greatest of all the flock-masters. Hugh was not much awed thereby. He never

learnt to believe in men who blustered. His simple mind told him that Master Cardonell was putting on a brag to drive a better bargain with the mayor. But he allowed it strange that Cardonell should go so far and looked for the mayor to turn upon him. In all this he was swiftly proved wrong. The mayor struggled out of the crowd, which was not civil, and shut himself up in his house and the crowd howled at the door and spattered it with filth. It was Cardonell who took his wrath and his injuries to the castle. Thence he emerged in an hour, still ruddier and more violent of gait, and made for his inn and could be heard afar driving his men to load their teams and be gone.

Then Hugh said mildly to Mark Holmelegg the grocer, "He is a man of his word, this Master Cardonell."

"I warrant him. And a man with a blow too. He has smitten Robin Aylward what will not soon heal."

"Alas, my master, these are cruel days," said Hugh and slunk away. The head of the long line of Cardonell's packhorses was already passing out of the North Gate.

Hugh made for Butcher Row and there begged a loan of fat Simon's pony, for he must needs go (as he said) fetch a clean bolt of fern, his bed was foul and his mother's none too sweet. Some jests he had to bear that he was grown a dainty squire, but at last he went off astride the pony.

Cardonell's train was a long line of dust across the common. Hugh made no haste to come up with it, jogging along at the packhorses' pace till he was well past Cutthorn and out of sight of the walls. Then he put his heels to the fat sides of that forest pony. Cardonell was riding on in front of his packhorses and it was another long mile, they were well away from the town, in the loneliness of barren heath country, before Hugh caught him.

"God save you, sir. May I speak a word with you?"

"Whose man are you?" Cardonell flashed a choleric blue eye.

"None but mine own, I thank God."

"Here is something too much of God," Cardonell cried.
"You come out of Hampton?"

"To serve you—if you will—and myself—if I can."
Hugh hoped that style would please him better.

"You are all rogues or rats in Hampton."

"Hear me; you may judge which I am. Sir, you want to sell your wool——"

"And your master in Hampton would buy it a penny a pack. Go burn in hell."

"I have no master in hell nor Hampton. What price would you have?"

The blue eyes stared at him, saw a bland assurance which went strangely with the simple clothes and the shaggy bare-backed pony.

"I cry your worship's pardon. Have you a poor thousand marks about you?"

"I asked for an honest price."

"Ay, you are honest folk in Hampton. My price is the price of the year before this foul trick of the ban was played on us flockmasters: ten marks the pack. There is your price, my lord. Do you buy?" he laughed.

"It is a high price. Is it——"

"Out on you! Are you fool or knave? My price is the same to small man and great man. I ask no more than fair worth and I take no less, not if I store ten years' shearing."

"Is it good clean wool?"

"Why, what do you know of wool, child? Mine is white fleece of Cotswold. There is none better than Tom Cardonell's mark."

"Well," Hugh was slow and solemn, "and at ten marks. Well. Hear me, my master. The price is high. You know well it is long before any man will pay so much. If I found you a way to sell a hundred packs presently would you spare me a mark on the pack?"

"So we come to it," Cardonell laughed. "Who is your man, rogue?"

"I do not know. Nor does he. I think you have a

mind to venture something. If you led your train away across the heath by night there might be a foreign ship in Beaulieu river at dawn, I cannot tell."

"Let us have it out. Who sent you?"

"No man, as I live by bread. No man knows what I have in my head but you."

"But me!" Cardonell roared. "What do I know? Who are you, in the fiend's name?"

"I am Hugh Camoys, a poor widow's son that sells her broideries. But I think I might find a ship for your wool—at a mark on the pack."

"Look you, Master Hugh Camoys—this is to break the King's ordinance—this is treason," Cardonell grinned.

And Hugh grinned too. "At a mark on the pack," said he. "I pray you go slowly and halt by the way, and I will make back to Hampton, and if I find my shipmaster, I will come after you and be your guide by Beaulieu."

"What, have I said I will venture?"

"Fare you well," Hugh laughed, and turned his pony.

He came into Hampton again by the salt marsh and the East Gate and leaving his pony with Azor the cowherd he made for the shipmasters' tavern. There sat the captains according to their custom, and among them Hooydonk. His little eyes fixed upon Hugh, who sat down with some fuss full in face of him, calling loudly for a tankard of white ale. This he drank at leisure and as he drank stared at Hooydonk. When he lounged out, Hooydonk followed him.

"That was a wicked bold dog," said Hooydonk in his ear. "That wants a whipping, yes?"

Outside in the lane under the wall Hugh turned. "I have some rare noble stuff to sell, master. Do you buy?"

"So," Hooydonk grunted. "I buy nothing what I do not see, my youngker. You show me."

Hugh did not stop nor answer. He led on from one lane to another till they were in an alley where there was none to listen but children. "Do you buy wool, myn-heer?" he smiled.

"So. That was the trick," said Hooydonk slowly. "You been not so clever as you think. Jan Hooydonk does not walk into that trap. You go tell your mayor he been a foolish fellow."

"Some men be so clever they will not eat good meat lest their bellies ache. Ask any in Hampton how the mayor loves Hugh Camoys. Here is the trick, mynheer. If there was a ship at dawn where I could tell you, she might take aboard a hundred packs of wool—at my price."

"That was fool's talk," said Hooydonk, but his little eyes were keen. "Where could a man load his ship at Hampton? The rogue archers watch all the shore."

"At ten marks the pack for the flockmaster: and a mark on each pack for me," Hugh went on calmly.

"And the devil to pay the bill," said Hooydonk, and pulled at his own ear.

"You know well it is an honest man's price: no more than you would have paid for if the port was open."

Hooydonk laughed. "That is what I puzzle at, younker."

"I am an honest merchant, mynheer."

"And that is strangest of all. You been too cunning to mean honest."

"God forbid!" said Hugh. "I never sold any man what he could not sell again to do him good. I want to thrive. What do you fear? You pay nothing but as the wool goes aboard. But I pray you if you are content with it have Hugh Camoys in your mind."

"I shall do that, whatever was done," Hooydonk chuckled. "Softly, my younker, softly. You go too swift for poor old Hooydonk. What is that wool of yours? I buy no coarse clip."

"White Cotswold wool, of a known mark. You shall see it before you buy."

"So. And where do I get it? From the castle quay?"

"Now hark in your ear. Can you work your ship into Beaulieu river by dawn?"

"So," Hooydonk puffed out the contents of his broad

chest. "That is it, at last. The Beaulieu water. That is a good trick. Yes, child, I know it, dark or drunk. I have been in there with glass for the monks and wine of Bourgogne. There is a good hard there—what do they call it?"

"Bucklershard. We look for you when dawn breaks." Hugh ran off to his pony. And Hooydonk went aboard his ship and thereafter his crew were hunted from their taverns and cookshops without noise and in the dusk that big Flemish carvel began to work down the river.

When the other captains coming from supper saw no riding light in her berth and made out that she was gone they suffered from surprise. "By St. Mark," said Condarini, "he hath a spirit, this Fleming. I have done him wrong." He stood on the poop of his galley gazing through the dark.

Cardonell had halted his company in Bassett and baited their horses and eaten the village empty and drunk the ale-house dry. Thus all was ready for a long night march when Hugh came up with him. It was given out in Bassett that some would go on by Romsey, some down to the Lymington salt pans to gather a bag of salt on each horse for the landward shires, and having thus confused the scent, the whole train turned off the Romsey road in the twilight and crossed the Test at Nursling ford and struck southward. It was a barren country, rolling heath which bore only a few stunted trees in the hollows. They had no village to pass, never a farm nor hovel, and the sandy track, grey in the dark, made good going and no horse could blunder into ditch or mire. Only the monks of the great house of Beaulieu Abbey were in the way to see or hear their passing. Hugh led across the head waters of the Beaulieu River where it was no more than a brook and came down the western bank. Though they heard the abbey bell ring complines and the great windows gleamed in the dark, they and their clatter were far enough away for safety, if any wordly monk or warden watched the night. So before dawn they came, no man making them afraid, to

the little quay of Bucklershard and loosed girths and lay down in the heather.

Jan Hooydonk had made good use of the double tides of Hampton water. Something darker than the dawn twilight loomed out in the river, came nearer, took ghostly shape and with a crackling of faggot fenders ground against the quay. Hugh stood looking up at the carvel's dark sides and a pipe whistled and from fore and aft men sprang on to the quay and ropes were flung to them and they made fast. Then slowly and carefully a round shape with a lantern climbed down from the poop. "Mynheer Hooydonk!" Hugh called and came to meet him.

The lantern was held up between their faces. "So. A good younker. I bin keep my time. And you also. Where was this wool?"

Cardonell joined them. "Ten marks the pack, master Fleming."

"I see the wool before you see the money."

"If your money is as good as my wool, you are an honest man." Cardonell led the way to a pack and cut the cords. Hooydonk bent over it with his lantern and tried it with hand and eye. "That was good wool, yes," he muttered, and peered at the mark on the pack. "I know that. That is the Cardonell mark."

"I am Tom Cardonell."

"God in heaven! Why was you not say that?" He swung round on Hugh and took him by the ear. "This rogue younker, he takes a mark on the pack to bring you and me together."

Cardonell laughed. "He takes a mark on the pack from me."

"By my faith, it is well earned," said Hugh anxiously. "You would have done no business but for me and I must sweat my heart out to bring you to it, and you go your ways and are safe, but I must live in Hampton and bear the risk. It is hard earned."

"I will not grudge you, boy," Cardonell said.

"Do not let him talk, he was make it two marks."

Hooydonk chuckled. "See, I take all you have, mynheer. Let us be busy. It is not good to stay here. Some of the rogue monks see my ship loading. Come, rouse out your knaves, we keep tally, you and me."

The sky in the east was growing golden, the greyness overhead broke in rifts of blue, they had light enough to work by and it seemed to Hugh that he had never seen men work like these Cotswold teamsters and Flemish seamen. Each party made it a point of honour that the others should not have to wait. Only the edge of the sun was up when the last pack was aboard and the tally was a hundred and ten.

"Hoo! That was not too bad," said Hooydonk. "You come aboard and I give you your moneys." They followed him into a cabin where the swinging lantern was silver and the bed overlaid with tapestry and table and panelling gleamed. "My name was good on a bill from Lynn to Bristol. Or you like the gold?"

"Let us have no bills nor names," said Cardonell.

"So. You drink a cup while I count, yes?" He opened a cupboard in the panelling and took out silver cups and a flagon of burgundy. "Good health, good shoaring," he turned to Hugh, "and good trade, my merchant. So. You count as I count. We lose no time like that." He unlocked a coffer and took out leather bags and began to tell gold pieces swiftly and Cardonell pouched them score by score. "One thousand and one hundred. Now for you, my younker." He counted out Hugh's hundred and ten. "There. Short reckonings, long friends. Do not forget Hooydonk. I come to Hampton next year also. We do business, you and me, yes?"

"By my faith, I hope for it," Hugh said. "Sir, if I have served you, I pray you when you come again seek if there be any weavers in Flanders have a mind to try fortune in England. I think I have work for them in Hampton, one or two."

"God in heaven! Here is one that looks far and far," Hooydonk chuckled.

"Do not forget me, mynheer."

"Forget you! You are not one to forget. Kiss me, child." Hooydonk hugged him. "There, rogue, go. Master Cardonell pay him his dues. We been need this great merchant's favour some day, we poor men."

"I warrant you," Cardonell laughed. "I fear him, I promise you. He will thrive if he hang us all." He pushed the money across the table.

"Ashore with you, go." Hooydonk hustled them out of the cabin. "It was not good to stay now, for you nor me." When they came on deck the carvel was already cast off but for one line at her stern and a boat manned and ready to tow her head out. They sprang ashore and Hooydonk climbed to the poop and a pipe twittered as they touched ground and slowly her broad bows moved from the quay. She had come in on the last of the flood. The ebb caught her bow and swept it round, the stern rope was cast off, she picked up her boat and made sail and stood out to sea in the sunlight.

"He loses no time," said Cardonell. "He is right. I am for Cotswold."

"I pray you go down to the salt pans. Load up with salt. So when folk ask what Cardonell is doing here by Beaulieu we have our answer."

"By my faith, you are the best liar that ever I knew," said Cardonell. But he did as he was bid and Hugh jogged on by the river back to Hampton.

As he came near the great abbey he was met by a monk on a mule. Hugh drew aside, cap off, to give the holy-man the road, but the monk stopped too. "I pray you, my son, have you seen a ship in the river?"

"A ship?" Hugh stared. "Nay, father, not I. Here is none, and sure the tide is running out."

"Ay, truly. But one of our verderers said that a ship came in at dawn."

Hugh shook his head. "I cannot tell. I have seen none. Why, do you look for a ship at the abbey, my father?"

"Alas, no. I would be blithe to hear of one." He considered Hugh sadly. "It is true, you saw none? Did you come by Bucklershard?"

"I have seen nought but a landward team going down to the salt pans, for they hired me to be their guide across the heath. There be ships enough in Hampton water, my father. Shall I bear word to some captain what you need in the abbey?"

"I thank you, I thank you. It shall not serve us. But you are a gracious youth. So you come out of Hampton?"

"Hugh Camoys, to do your will, a poor guildsman of Hampton."

"God prosper you. And what is the talk in the town?"

Again Hugh shook his head. "We live hard days, my father. Men say the foreign ships must sail away with their gold and the town is sad and sorry."

"God mend our poor time," the monk sighed. "The wool houses in Hampton stand full?"

"Ay, full and over full and the merchants make moan and poor men go hungry."

"Our Lady be kind! And we have a year's crop in our poor house of Beaulieu and none to buy."

They parted with salutations of pious melancholy and the monk went on to look for his ship and Hugh made for Hampton over the bridge at Beaulieu. But as he passed the abbey he spoke with the lay brother at the gate and over the bread and ale he begged heard that the monk on the mule was Father Jeremy the treasurer.

He was something disquieted. The treasurer of Beaulieu Abbey was a great man. If he busied himself to discover what had been doing at Bucklershard, he must think it matter which much concerned the abbey and he had every man in the countryside at his command to help him to the truth. If he made it out, he would be bitter, for with a year's crop useless the abbey must take it ill that others should contrive to sell their wool, and the abbey of Beaulieu had power to make the way of transgressors hard.

Hugh came back to Hampton going over and over in his head all his precautions and the chances that any evidence could be put together against him and almost persuaded himself that he was in no danger. If the worst fell, if some verderer or fowler or fisherman could swear that he had seen wool put aboard the carvel, he would not know Cardonell; if Cardonell had to stand the question what he was doing by Beaulieu River, he could plead the salt pans—if he were pressed hard, he would never betray Hugh Camoys, he was not the man for that. And yet, short of proof, there might be trouble. Hugh came into Hampton with his pony laden with fern, and spent the rest of that day making new beds for himself and his mother, and hid his gold in the wattle wall, and said many prayers before he slept, thus hoping to avoid risks with man and with God.

When he went out into the town in the morning it relieved him to discover that all was as it had been. The streets were still full of idle, angry, arguing folk, but there was no talk of anything new save that the chief of the Dutch captains had sailed empty away in despair and the rest were like to go. Hampton was more sure than ever of its ruin, more embittered against mayor and constable and King. But there was not a whisper of a rumour that Hooydonk had got his cargo after all. As for Hugh Camoys, no one, not even his friends, had missed that insignificant youth or thought of him. It was very well. It could not have been better.

And yet when the door of the little house opened in the evening and Hugh saw the fair melancholy face of Contarini the Venetian captain, something in his body sank. Contarini came in with little tripping steps and made a bow to Eleanor Camoys. "Of your grace, good dame: a boy of this house, they say, sells broideries," he spoke English with a careful precision much unlike Hooydonk's blundering ease. "Ah, here is the lad. I would see your wares, my friend."

Hugh would not believe it was for embroideries he came.

But the game had to be played. In haste embroideries and still more broideries were spread out and Contarini took time and pains over them. He acted mightily well - or he had an honest love for the craft. He made as much of them as that queer fellow De Roffa. He spent money too. And when he rose at last, "Gracious lady, I thank you for this pleasure," he bowed. "I have not seen work so noble in any land of the north. You have a fine spirit." He turned to Hugh. "Will you be kind, my friend? Carry these pieces for me. I go now to my ship."

There was no denying him. But Hugh kissed his mother before he went. Contarini watched that ceremony with a sad smile.

Twilight was darkening. When they came to the water gate, the porter was out jangling his keys ready to lock up for the night. "Do not sleep yet, Walter," Hugh said. "I shall be knocking at the wicket soon. I have but to carry these broideries to the captain's ship."

Then for the first time since they left the house Contarini spoke. "Well done," said he, and again he smiled.

The great galley still lay moored by the quay. At the gangway to the poop Contarini stopped. "I pray you honour me," he bowed and Hugh went aboard first, feeling a weight upon his midriff. In the waist of the ship he saw (and smelt) the slaves who worked her oars gnawing their supper of bread and onions. Contarini guided him with a finger on his arm. They came into a cabin many times larger than Hooydonk's, perfumed with spices, hung with tapestries. Lamps that shone like gold burnt with fragrant flames. There was a golden bowl of roses and dishes of fruit on the inlaid table.

Contarini sank upon the crimson cushions of a couch. "Sit in that chair, I pray you." He waved a long hand. "It is the best I have." He took an olive and nibbled it and in one gesture offered Hugh all the fruit.

Hugh sat down clumsily and shuffled his feet and mumbled something about thanks and too kind.

Contarini sighed. "Sir, you hurt me. I do not deserve

that you should think me thus deceived. I know that you are not this childish fool you show me, but my enemy."

"God have mercy, your worship's enemy, I?"

"The enemy of Lorenzo Contarini and a traitor to your King," Contarini said softly. "That is brave work for a young man. Sir, I honour you. For your King—I do not know his strength. But I have to show you that I can deal with you."

"By the holy saints I have done you no wrong."

"You have given a Dutchman a cargo of wool while my galleys lie empty."

"Who, I? Good lack, I could give no man any cargo. I have no wool. I am a poor lad who lives by selling broideries. Sir, this is some lying tale a rogue has told to cheat you."

Contarini took another olive. "You will still believe I can be cheated," he said sadly, "It is unworthy of you. Well, have it so. Now I go to this Hampton mayor, who is not your friend, and tell him that you contrived with Jan Hooydonk he should take his sow of a ship round into Beaulieu River and there you brought him Cardonell's wool. What is it befalls a man who ships wool against your King's law? Do they hang him?"

Hugh flung back his big head and for the first time let Contarini see his eyes, but he spoke mildly. "Your worship who knows so much must know that too: and know what it may profit you to destroy me. But for my part I cannot tell. I think you will get never a groat by it."

"There is a thing called revenge, Hugh," Contarini murmured with his wistful smile.

"It never filled any man's belly."

"Woe is mo! And your mother hath an artist's soul. You—you are but a merchant."

"I thought it was your worship was crying out for wool to buy."

"A hit, a hit," Contarini lifted his hand. "Master Hugh, I am happy to fight a bout with you. You are slow, you are clumsy, but you make stubborn play and you have an

eye. It is true I want wool. It does not please me to go home empty and that a fat Fleming should snatch a cargo where I can get none hurts my honour. Find me wool and I pardon you. But if I have no wool then at least I will have my revenge on Master Hugh. It shall profit no man to serve other ships better than the galleys of Venice. I pray you understand me now. I have striven to be plain with you."

"Wool does not grow on every bush, my master," said Hugh sullenly.

"I know it well. You should have come first to me. That is what I cannot forgive. You are clumsy, you are slow."

"The Fleming paid twelve marks a pack."

"Oh, rogue, how you cheated him!"

"It was but two for me and ten for the flockmaster."

"I will remember it to tell the mayor."

"I shall be gone out of Hampton before that."

"Yes. That might be," Contarini smiled. "If I let you ashore."

"You will have no wool from me if you keep me aboard."

"It is true. But I might sail away with Master Hugh chained to an oar and scourged morning and night."

"And an empty ship. You will be welcome in Venice."

"But a happy man," said Contarini softly. "You tempt me. You do not understand. You are a merchant. You do not know how much you tempt me."

"I know you will pay twelve marks—if I can find the wool."

"Indeed I would advise you to find it," said Contarini and smiled. "Fare you well, merchant."

When he felt the stones of the quay under his feet Hugh praised God and the Mother of God. He went home in the conviction that he must pack and run away from Hampton. But he slept on it—or rather, he could not sleep on it—and in those long night hours his stubborn mind refused to take defeat. He was always of that temper which grows bolder by thought.

The next day's noon found him on the butcher's pony at the gate of Beaulieu Abbey. There came to Father Jeremy the treasurer a lay brother and said that a poor lad of Hampton, by name Hugh Camoys, begged speech of him. Father Jeremy, who was walking in the vineyard with the cellarer to make a guess at the chances of the vintage and to get an appetite, searched his memory, said this was a rogue pedlar. "What is it he hath to sell? By St. Bernard, I have forgot. Give him his meat and let Lawrence talk to him. Come, brother, we must dine too."

So Hugh was given dinner with the lay brethren and the treasurer's clerks plied him curiously and he talked embroidery till they were smitten into silence. At long last he was admitted into the treasury where Father Jeremy sat rosy in his white gown, filling amply an ample chair. "Child, you did not come to me to sell broideries," he said reproachfully. "We have no need of your Hampton craft."

"Oh my father, alas that you should say so! There is none better."

"Fie, fie! you are too young to praise yourself. Pride goeth before destruction. Speak simply, child, speak modestly if you would have my favour."

"I am here to serve you."

"Child, you are kind," the monk smiled.

"You have wool, a year's crop in store and none to buy. I know a shipmaster who wants wool and none will sell."

"Oh, rogue, was that your ship came into Bucklershard?"

"Is there a ship at Bucklershard? I did not know."

Father Jeremy shook a fat white finger at him. "This is your Hampton guile? Beware, beware. He that digs a pit, himself shall fall therein. The subtle man makes a snare for his own feet."

"I pray you, what is this you talk of? There is no ship in the river that I know."

"You know well what I talk of, Hugh Camoys. Look to it, you are like to be hanged."

"Because I would help the abbey of Beaulieu to a price for its wool? By my faith, I thought that were a good and pious deed. But if it is wrong I will none of it. Give me counsel, I pray you, my father. Shall I go back to Hampton presently and think no more of your abbey?"

"My son, you have done wickedness enough. You have used our river to the profit of worldly men and the hurt of our noble house. It is a great sin and I cannot tell how you will purge it."

Hugh hung his head and looked at the ground and shuffled his feet. "If a man paid eight marks the pack?" he suggested meekly.

"Go to, child, you talk impiously. What wicked folly is this! The wool of Beaulieu is wool of the salt meadows, long and rich."

"The mutton is rich," said Hugh, "but alas, none of God's creatures hath all the virtues. The fleece is but coarse, my father."

"Child of sin! Who made you a judge over us?"

"I judge neither man nor sheep. But we live in the world, and the world says that wool of the meadow never was worth wool of the hill, and before my lord the King forbade that any man should send his wool overseas white wool of Cotswold was but ten marks the pack."

"Fie, fie! would you pay less to God's house than to a flockmaster?"

"Nay, my father, I pay nothing. Find any man now who will buy of flockmaster or abbey. The King hath slain our Hampton trade."

"Oh wicked one," Father Jeremy cried. "Are you come to mock me? I have a whip for your back. The constable shall hear of your foreign ship at Bucklershard."

"A foreign ship? God forgive you, my father, you are in haste to think evil. If a ship came into the river and took away all your wool and you were paid eight marks the pack, you would not say that ship was foreign."

"God forbid," said Father Jeremy, and blew his nose.

"This is a loyal house. We honour the King and obey his ordinance faithfully. It is not to be thought of we should sell our wool overseas. Look you, good lad, why I asked you curiously of a ship, it was because I had a mind to sell some merchant of Hampton, ay, or it might be London, and if a ship came it would be timely."

"And so I thought in my humble wise. My father, I am here to serve you. If I find you a ship, may I have your noble favour?"

"Surely, surely. No man ever served our house and was sad or sorry."

"At eight marks the pack. My father, you will spare me something in my hand?"

"My son, we muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn. Hark in your ear, what ship is this?"

"A great Venetian." Father Jeremy's mouth opened and he breathed hard. "It needs not he should come up the river, no, not even to Bucklershard. Load the wool into your barges overnight when I bring you word. He will come into the river at dawn and the barges may go alongside while he lies in the stream."

"The children of this world," said Father Jeremy, a little short of breath, "are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

"Pray for me, father." Hugh bent his head.

That night he boarded the Venetian galley again. In the perfumed cabin Contarini lay with his lute singing a queer little song.

"Will you take a cargo of wool to London, my master?" said Hugh.

Contarini went on singing and when the song was done: "Do you know what that says, Englishman?" he asked. "Do you feel it in your marrow?"

"It is like a child crying. It makes me sorry for some one."

"God afflict you with torments," said Contarini gently. "It is pure joy. It is a man telling his love to an heathen queen while she mocks him with her slaves."

Hugh considered that. "A mean fellow," he pronounced.

"First he pities, then he despises," Contarini murmured. "A fish in a man's shape is he! Oh, white blood, did you never look on any woman to yearn for her?"

"Not that I know. Will you take a cargo of wool to London?"

Contarini put down his lute. "What coward's trick is this?"

"Go find another coward in Hampton who will play my tricks."

"It is an answer," Contarini said; "it is in a manner an answer. You will break your King's law and go about to be hanged. You will lie and you will cheat, which is to seek damnation. (I will be sworn you believe in God and His hell.) And for what? You have no spirit in you. What would you have of your life, Hugh Camoys?"

"I would have rich comfort about me."

"A good sty for master pig and plenty in the trough."

"Such as you have. I am hungry. I have lived poor all my days yet. And if I thrive, I will make some better order in Hampton town that a man may have what he is worth and honest folk shall not toil and pine like my mother."

"He hath a thought in him, as cold as he is," Contarini murmured. "A good Christian thought," and he laughed. "Peace and comfort and to each man his own worth. Here is a slaves' heaven, Hugh Camoys. What is this folly of a cargo to London?"

"You may take all the wool of Beaulieu Abbey at twelve marks the pack. You bring your galley into Beaulieu River with the morning light and their barges drop down to you. You pay me on the tally and I make your quittance with the treasurer. You should be clear of the river by noon and it is given out you carry the wool to London."

"The rogue monks! Here is a paltry lie. They would not break the law. I see the whites of their eyes. Their wool must not go to Venice. But they will slay the Vene-

tian who buys. Twelve marks for coarse meadow wool ! ”

“ Two are for me, my master. And right hard earned. It is I who stand in danger for this.”

“ I warrant you ! ” Contarini laughed. “ You will be their sacrifice if the trick is known. By St. Mark, you will spend a fearful winter, Hugh. But twelve marks ! If God is just He hath an especial hell for monks—and merchant souls lie with them.”

“ What is your wrong ? There is none other ship will get wool in Hampton this year. Good faith, you should thank God for this fortune.”

“ And Master Camoys withal ? A right Jewish God, he. Well, I take it. Give them warning. I will be in their holy river with the dawn of Friday. Get you gone.”

So in this manner the thing was done. On the next day Hugh went to Beaulieu and gave the word and the lay brothers were busy loading the wool into barges till dark. They turned out again after complines and took the barges down river as the dawn broke on the ebb. With the light Contarini brought his great galley in, for her fifty oars made nothing of the tide and she came on leaving swirls of broken white water on either side to wash upon the sand, like some glittering insect moved by many legs. She let go an anchor, she shipped her starboard oars and the barges came alongside.

Then Hugh Camoys beheld a new Contarini, short of speech and loud, a sea captain with an eye that missed no man's slackness or blundering, no jamming of tackle or trouble in the hold. Nothing could be more unlike the Flemish way. Contarini must see everything done himself. Contarini's men had to be driven, and with blows. But he did not open one pack to see the wool, he kept no tally. When all was aboard he came to Hugh and asked the number and was told and ran below and came back soon with a bag of money. Hugh weighed it in his hands dubiously. He liked Hooydonk's counting out on the table better.

“ You are a paltry fellow,” Contarini smiled. “ Have no fear. I look to see you again,”

"God send it," said Hugh. "I pray you have me in mind. And when you come again bring me wine of Italy and Spain. Our Hampton vintners lack and pine."

Contarini laughed. "I love you, child, you are all of a piece. If your mother lay a dying you would bid her send you down something from heaven to sell in Hampton."

"God forgive you, you do me wrong," said Hugh meekly. "But a man must live."

"Live then," Contarini cried out. "Passion of God, live! Get you gone. You do not know what I mean," and he thrust Hugh overside into the barge.

In the treasury of the abbey Hugh counted out laboriously eight marks the pack on packs two hundred and five, keeping the bag well hidden in his lap lest Father Jeremy should guess Contarini had paid him half as much again. And Contarini had been honest with him.

The treasurer ranged his last pile of gold and sighed and smiled.

"I pray you, are you content?" said Hugh.

"Yea, yea. You have done well for us. Surely God will reward you."

"It is my hope, father," said Hugh, meekly watching the money on the table while he thrust the money bag under his doublet. "Good faith, there is no flockmaster in the south will sell his crop for such a price."

"Surely God's hand is in this. It was of His providence I met you on that day by Bucklershard."

"My father, I dare not deny it," said Hugh, feeling the bag at his belt.

"The abbey will never stint for good service, child," Father Jeremy pushed a pile of gold across the table. "Our merchants thrive if they be faithful."

Hugh picked up fifty marks, and laid down ten. "I would not take more of God's house than my bare need," he said meekly.

"You are in our remembrance," Father Jeremy beamed upon him. "Peace be with you, my son. You are in the right way."

So Hugh rode back to Hampton and that night there was in the wattle wall a bag of some thousand marks and he slept a dreamless sleep and rose to write such a letter as this :

Sir,—

Here is much sorrow and strife and what shall be the end no man knoweth. But this is sure, evil is spoken on every hand and all cry out for a better time which none here dare promise them, and merchant and mariners be most bitter. So praying a happy deliverance from our afflictions I rest your lordship's poor servant and bedesman.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WIDOW'S DAUGHTER

THREE foreign ships sailed empty away. The ships of Hampton were laid up for the winter. The leaves fell and the frosts came and it was a hard winter for poor folk. Little money was being spent, little work done in Hampton. Merchants and master craftsmen would risk nothing, but held fast to what they had and bade their grumbling workmen blame the ban on wool and them that made it and upheld it. Master Mayor, who had been used to rule in Hampton like a king, found that men drew aside from him in the street, and even in the little packed court of aldermen he could count on no friends but the two who had bought wool with him to hold it till next year. On the day of his election for another year's office, when the good guildsmen should but have registered his will and pleasure to be mayor still, a riot broke out which the constable's yeomen had to quell. Thereafter, whenever any of the constable's men were caught singly or by small companies in the town they fared so ill that the constable, having scolded the mayor and been answered with vain complaints, closed the castle gates, and he and his lived like a garrison beleaguered in a country of enemies.

But the little house by the East Gate never lacked fire nor meat nor spices withal, and Dame Carnoys' women had work enough and good wages. While her wonderful son could find money to pay them, Eleanor would never have thought of sending them away. She was still something bewildered by her swift change of fortune, but it was her

nature to believe that what she had was given for others to share.

In the depths of his well-guarded heart Hugh might have found the same faith. But he did not look for it. He was thinking of what would best serve Hugh Camoys and his mother. The great gains of his adventure in wool left his head as cool as they found it. That betwixt summer and winter he should have risen from a poor vagabond boy to a guildsman with a thousand marks laid by, gave him no high conceit of himself. It was the Lord's doing, he said upon his knees, and marvellous in his eyes. This singular favour of heaven he dared not expect continually. The chance of breaking the law to such profit must be rare. What occupied his mind was the dilemma between wasting or losing his gains. He much inclined at first to risk nothing, to send the work-women away and live frugally till better times. But that did not long please him. Some of his thousand marks must waste away in mere living, and he would be poorer in the spring than at Martinmas, a horrid thought. Better risk something than sit down and dwindle. And if he shrewdly went about it, the risk should not be great. There was still money in the land, as mad as it was, and men and women still wore clothes. Let the wenches stitch, not with silver thread nor in cloth of gold, and it should go hard but Hugh Camoys would find a market for his wares. He looked for no great gains; he had already come to count his broideries as petty trade; he was eager for ventures of large design; but till the silly world grew quiet again, or another chance rose out of its follies, he was content to turn a few marks here and there, to make no more than livelihood so he need not touch his money in the wall.

The thing went better than his expectation. Little could be done in Hampton, but there were towns in the south country which did not live by the foreign wool trade, and manor houses and rich yeomen, and his mother's work made its price and he rode far afield: Romsey knew him and Winchester and Chichester and Salisbury,

too, and the money in the wall did not dwindle but bred.

This business brought him goodwill in Hampton. By the winter's end, few grumbled at his fortune, it was common talk that he was a good fellow and deserved to thrive, for he took trade from no other merchant nor craftsman yet found new work for Hampton folk and brought new money into Hampton, which through that black winter none other could do. Hugh was indeed at some pains to be liked. He stood aloof from the many quarrels in the town, he was to all men if they chose friendly, he made no show of prosperity but bought at fair prices and beat no man down and, when he could cheaply, gave help. So he established his reputo as an honest man and a wise, a trusty good fellow.

Among the houses of Hampton which opened then to this child of poverty was Dame Overey's: it was in law her son's, but the mother ruled, or the mother and daughter together. Time out of mind, the Overeys had been mercers under the sign of the Swan, and there was none of that trade richer in the town. Eleanor Camoys had been no more to Dame Overey than an honest poor seamstress, but when Hugh began to come to the Swan and buy in gross, when it was known that the Camoys broideries were selling far and wide, the ladies of the house of Overey had a welcome ready for mother and son.

Eleanor lacked relish for it. She was not happy in any house but her own. But if it pleased Hugh she would go, and Hugh was pleased. The house in Bugle Street was such as he desired, not the end of his ambition, indeed, it was too old and cramped, and he had a love of space, but richly comfortable with clean rushes on the floor and cupboards in the wall, with chairs, with a cloth upon the table, and a plate for each and a cup and a private knife. Neither Dame Overey nor her daughter, Kate, had a hand's turn to do with the supper. The kitchen was a room apart and the meat was brought by servant lads. Good meat it was, too, mallards and a swan beside a chine of pork; and though

wine was grown scarce in Hampton they had sweet Spanish wine after the spiced ale. So merchants should live, Hugh thought, and was very courteous to Dame Overey.

She and her daughter were civil enough, too, and he came to use the house often. They were much alike, jolly, quick women, comfortable to a man—the mother something fat and florid, the daughter buxom. The girl had a beckoning dark eye, too, and Hugh found her good company on the settle by the fire while her stolid brother pored over his reckonings and her mother sewed discreetly.

Kate Overey was the first woman who had shown that she thought of him as a man, which made her kindness very interesting. She was a clean, fragrant woman and he had never sat by any such but his mother. She was mighty comely, too, clear white and red in what was seen and of a noble rich shape in what was not. And withal she was of name and kin that none could deny, a maid much desired and wooed. Hugh's blood quickened to find her content that her side should go against his. It was a proof that he had achieved, an omen that he would stand higher yet.

One thing only in her pleasant company disturbed him, that she would laugh often when he knew of nothing to laugh at. A long story of how he bartered embroidery for some Sussex hammered iron and sold that in Winchester to a merchant from Oxford, whom he verily believed an Hebrew Jew, and on the road bought from a German of the steelyard certain gloves furred and jewelled out of Borussia, for which the Bishop of Salisbury gave him a great price—to all this noble matter she listened prettily enough, but after a minute must needs burst out laughing.

"Here is a great jest indeed," said Hugh, "but I did not make it." For he was proud of the final victory in that difficult campaign.

"No, faith, your mother made it," Kate laughed on. "With your father to help her. Good man, he knew not what he did, God forgive him."

"Amen. God rest his soul," said Hugh soberly. "So you account me a fool, Mistress Kate?"

"Not I, Master Hugh. I will be sworn to it you had the better of them all, yea, even of the Hebrew Jew. Or of the devil himself if he bought and sold with you. Holy St. Bride, deliver me from dealing with a fool of your make"; but still she was laughing and he looked sour. She laid a soft pink hand on his big knee. "Good faith, my master, I do believe you are as shrewd as you think, ay, and more. But did no maid ever tell you before, a great shrewd fellow may be good mirth?"

"None that I know. Unless she had tried to have something of mine too cheap."

"Fie, what have I asked of you?" She took away the hand, she drew herself up, making much of her bosom. "What do I want of you, sir?"

"To laugh at me. I am content, if we both laugh. Let me into your humour, Kate."

"You are stiff as buckram," said she, and leaned against him, and looked into the fire and then at him, her smooth clear cheek very close. "Here we sit and you talk buying and selling by the hour. It is not a man but a merchant. Did ever you hear that before, Master Hugh?"

"Yes, faith," Hugh smiled. "But not from a maid. It was a Venetian. Because I did not like his songs. Will you sing to me, Kate?"

"How I cheapened my new shoes. With a ha, and a ho, and a ha, ha, ha." She thrust out a foot in red leather, very long and pointed, with something of a neat leg above it. "Does that please you, my master?"

"Very well. And you have another as fine as that, too. But my Venetian, he sang of death."

"Out on him. There is the church for that. But I should have thought you would like it well enough."

"I pray you, do I smell of the grave?"

"Sir, you are a pious, godly youth."

"Who, I? You are soon satisfied, Kate."

"And as I was saying, sadly earnest : but not so much alive."

"Look, how men may be deceived, till a maid sets them right. For I thought I lived as hard as any and there is your brother was swearing in the Wool House that I was the briskest fellow in Hampton."

"Brisk and hard. Ay, faith. That is well enough in the Wool House. Do men live by wool, Master Hugh ? "

"Half England, Mistress Kate."

"Fie, you do not even know what I mean. Buying and selling, that is not life. What do you seek to be, child ? "

"A merchant in Hampton, so please you."

"That is doing, not being."

"Faith, it is something pleasant to do, Kate. To have a good trade in hand, to make rich ventures, that brings a man good estate and power. I will have that by God's grace, trust me."

"Trust you ! " she echoed with a laugh. "God save me from that ! Oh, you will do it all, I doubt you not. You will grow rich and be alderman and mayor. God save your worship. But that is not living."

"Is it not ? Then I cannot tell what life is for. What is life but doing ? "

"I have said it. You do not know what I mean. Not doing but being, that is life. You are a brisk, hard fellow—and you are nothing."

It was he who put his hand on her then, and he who laughed. "Here is a scold ! " he said. "Am I nothing, Kate ? You know better. What makes you breathe quick, child ? "

"I believe you think you are a man," she said. She was something flushed. She touched her dress at the neck and smoothed her bosom. "And that is a strange thing. Pray, sir, is it pleasant ? "

"You will never know. Fie, what has a maid to do with being a man ? "

"She makes the creature," said Kate, and her eyes looked bold into his. "That is her part."

And again Hugh laughed. "While he makes the woman. Here is pretty work. Shall we venture it, Kate?"

Her dark eyes still studied him. "You do not believe a word I say," she pronounced.

"Oh, I promise you." He took both her hands in one of his.

"That I should make your worship? Oh, ay, you believe that in a sort. I am Kate Overey and as goodly a match as any man may find in Hamplon."

"Now that is to do me wrong. If you were Kate Nobody I should seek you still."

"And thank God I have not to make that good, said he in his heart," she laughed. "Master Hugh, if I were Kate Nobody, it is very like I would humbly thank your worship. For you could give what I should lack. But since I am Kate Overey I am not for you."

"Because my wife would have no more than the maid hath of her own? Wait awhile, mistress. By God's light that is a challenge and I take it."

Her eyes opened wide. "Faith, here is flame," she said. But she shook her head. "We are what we are. Go in peace, child."

Hugh looked round the room and she laughed. The brother was gone out. The mother was nodding asleep. He dared the great deed, pulled her to him roughly and kissed her hard and rose with blood in his dark cheeks, smiling.

"I am content," she said. "Good faith, Hugh, I think we deserved that, each of us. Get you gone, child. You have had all that you are like to have."

"Well begun is half done." Hugh went to the door with his arm round her.

"Ay, think upon that," said she, and put him out into the night.

When she came back Dame Overey was wide awake, and her eyes questioned.

"I am still a maid, good mother," Kate laughed.

"For how long, rogue?"

"For ever and a day if he is the only man. I have bid him go."

"He hath a will, I warrant him," her mother smiled.

"Ay, when he thinks he will. But he does not think of me unless he touches me. God save me, I will make shift to do without him."

And the truth is he never had more of Kate Overey. He frequented her still, and she was content to play with him and let him kiss her once in awhile. But he never came as near her again after that night was gone. When he remembered it, he felt sore.

CHAPTER IX

ARMS AND THE MAN

WHEN the new year was drawing towards Lady Day there came to the house by the East Gate a mariner and asked for Hugh and showed him a ring, saying, "Sir, do you know this?"

Hugh, turning it over in his hand, knew that he had never seen it before but made out on it, for it was broad and massive, a chasing of a bear and ragged staff.

"It is a chance I know who sends it," he said, for the bear and ragged staff were my Lord Warwick's device.

Then the mariner said, "If you know it, it is yours. And this letter," upon which he turned and was going.

"But wait," said Hugh. "I may need to make answer."

"If you do, I shall not carry it," said the mariner. "For I go on to Calais. Fare you well, merchant." And opening the letter Hugh read only this: "It is well enough, lad, but it may be better yet. You should be busy folk in Hampton now and onward. I would hear of you that none have rest nor leisure. So shall you thrive."

This riddle he turned over in his mind day after day in his slow fashion. He always liked to brood upon policies. The letter was surely De Roffa's and what De Roffa wanted was plain enough and nothing new. The new thing was that he should say it again and waste a gold ring upon it. He must be very earnest there should be turbulence in the town still. The sea captain who brought the letter was also to be considered. He had come to fit out certain ships laid up in the river for the Captain of Calais, who

was my Lord Warwick. He had manned them with Hampton crews and sailed away. Warwick's policy then was to take out of Hampton all that he could get, while by demanding strife in the town which must keep the constable busy he would ensure that the King should get nothing. But what more he intended, what the summer would bring, Hugh could make no satisfying guess. He was ill at ease. He had always confidence in himself when a choice must be made on the instant, when something had to be done. He would suspect his foresight and his judgment whenever he had to think far ahead, would change his purpose and hover in uncomfortable doubt.

So he did nothing new but went about his wonted business. In the week after Easter, he was riding home from Salisbury market and stopped to bait at Romsey. While he sat over his bacon and small ale, darkly ruminative, there came into the tavern a man in a scarlet cloak with a cock's head and tail on his cap, who called out in a booming voice, "God save all here," and made a great business of ordering his dinner, asking for many things which no country inn could give. This done he sat himself down at Hugh's table, who, having judged him a mountebank, threw him a "God bless you," and went on with his bacon.

The man stared and rolled his eyes. "My master, you are young," he said in a hollow voice, "yet are you old. You eat, yet are you not fed. Your spirit is cold and heavy and fear abides in you."

Hugh looked up. "Now, by my faith, you are good company," said he.

"The best, my master. I am truth."

"You are wise to say so. I had not known else."

"Fie, fie. You may deceive yourself. Me you do not deceive. I am Rodolfo of Salerno. But come. I see you are a wise youth and wary. You know that all is not well with you."

Hugh smiled. "Sir, I see you are a physician. I never was ill in my life."

"Right and wrong. Alas, how wrong! He that never knew he was ill was never well. This heaviness in you, these pauses while you eat, those dull eyes, that gloomy brow—fie, fie, these are not nature, good sir, these are corruption of God's wholesome body that He gave you. Look you, I am as you say, a physician." He twirled his cap. "It is not for nothing I wear the cock of Esculapio who was the father of our art. That is mine honour as it were the King his crown. Few there be have the right of it. But I am Rodolfo of Salerno, which is the one true school of medicine in Christenty, and I was master of the school till for a holy vow to heal the poor in every land I came hither. See"—he opened the pouch at his girdle and pulled out a snake—"fear him not. He is a black viper and his bite is death. But he bites not while my hand is on him. This is that very viper which leapt out of the fire upon the holy apostle St. Paul in the Island of Melita. And St. Luke which was a learned physician took him and gave him to our school in Salerno, where he taught his art. Now, master, I have here a balsam which is made of herbs that grow only upon the most high mountains, which are a league nearer to the sun than all land else and so do bear a greater portion of the virtue of sunlight than any other thing which is. And these being distilled, as much as a mule may carry into this small potion, look you, are sovereign against that heaviness and cold corruption of heart which doth afflict you. And the price is but one poor mark. For my vow is that I must sell for no more than will bear me and my mule upon my pilgrimage."

Then Hugh asked him with a yawn if he found many to buy, and heard another rigmarole about the cold darkness of the lands in the north making the genial humours of the body thick and sluggish, wherefore the English were most prone to darkness of spirit. Hugh laughed and asked what he knew of England. Every long mile, the physician vowed, from Hampton water to Berwick Town and found sad work: here the black plague and there the sweating sickness, but worst of all this mouldering of the

spirit into heavy thoughts and dread, for the which——

“Out on it, man, we be peaceful, merry folk.”

“Merry, sir? Go, look in a glass. And for peace—well, God mend all.”

For the first time Hugh thought Rodolfo of Salerno might be some small use. “Why, here is something a man can lay hold on. I say I am well, you say I am sick. I might believe you. But when I say we are in peace and you say there is war, come, brother, where is it?”

“Who talks, said the deaf man? I hear none. Where is the sun, quoth the blind man, all is dark. Fie, fie, child, you are deaf and blind. Your apprehensions be corrupt and dull. There is clashing of arms all about you.”

“God ha’ mercy upon us,” Hugh laughed. “Where, man, where?”

The physician shook his head. “There be none so blind as they that will not see, nor use God’s grace to be made whole. Alas, child, your wits be shrunk and indurate. And for one poor mark you may be healed.”

Hugh pushed it across the table. “Come, now, tell your tale.”

But the physician poured forth only a rigmarole of how the potion must be taken and went his way.

Hugh sat looking at the little phial with disgust. He did not like to pay money for nothing. He feared that talk of war might be nothing but a trick to stir him, a fear which was keener when he found that the physician had gone off saying Hugh would pay his reckoning. But riding slowly home, he decided to believe there was some truth in the rogue. He was assuredly not of Salerno, no Italian but pure English vagabond, but he must have been wandering somewhere and he might have come out of the north, and if he had been in the north he might have seen something. It was in the north that the King’s friends had their strength, and if the north was standing to arms they must fear some stroke for the mastery of the realm. The rumour of war from the north fitted like a piece of a puzzle into the plans that there should be turmoil in the south.

Before the week was out Hugh went to one man and another among the smiths and the armourers of Hampton and bought what he could of arrowheads and weapons and steel of proof to be held till his order. He let it be known that he had word the Hansa merchants were making ready for a war in High Germany. He ventured a good part of his thousand marks, not without qualms, for he was not yet used to spending boldly, but he had satisfied his mind that however things went he knew a way to get the money back. He worked quietly, using one man's jealousy of another to keep each buying secret but making no fuss of secrecy. And the thing made no great noise. Trade was so bad in Hampton and men so set against each other that each kept private any gain he had.

The mayor had not heard of it when he was bidden to the castle, a summons which gave him no pleasure. For years he had been Sir Ralph du Pré's agent to do the King's business in the town; left to his own devices how things were done so the ordinances were obeyed and the dues were paid, a profitable, pleasant trust, but fostering pride.

He had come to believe that the constable could not do without him and that of the two he was the greater man, while the constable was discovering that he was an upstart rogue. The first clash came over Hugh's entry to the merchant guild. Neither man cared to break with the other over that, the mayor had too much to lose and the constable knew that a time of trouble was near and would not risk a change in the old order. They drew together again over the wool ordinance wherein the mayor saw profit and heartily enforced it. But when the riots broke out, when the yeomen of the castle had to quell the townsfolk and live under arms, there was new and worse discord. The constable rebuked and reproached, the mayor blamed the ordinance and the constable and the King. The constable became domineering, the mayor sullen, and still it was plain that each had need of the other: the constable could find no other mayor but Master Aylward to do his will, the mayor could not maintain himself without the constable.

Such were their minds when the mayor came to the castle on that spring morning. The constable received him not in the hall, but in a little chamber, an unhappy choice, which was meant for a sign of friendly confidence and taken as a slight to mayoral dignity. So some amiable condescension about him and his found the mayor gruff. It did not mend the matter to ask about the town.

"Ill enough, my lord. And will be no better till trade is free again."

"Why, you must hold out yet. Please God, we will have peace and plenty before this year's end. But hark in your ear, sirrah, we must earn it."

"Earn it? I know not what a merchant may earn who must not sell his goods."

"Ay, that must be mended and shall when we have good order again. You know well against whom that ordinance was aimed, against the rogue Flemings who cherish the King's enemies. We have to make him safe against them, Master Robin, and all will be well."

"I cannot tell what you mean," said the mayor sullenly.

"Why, man, I mean my Lord of York and his familiar, the Bear of Warwick. We are come to the trial now. They marshal their rogues against the King. This I tell you to show you my trust in you."

"If it is so, we shall know it soon enough."

"So it is and the King looks for loyalty in his good town of Hampton. Come now, tell me, I gather my men and the time comes when I must march. You Hampton merchants will do your part, I doubt you not. Tell me now, what moneys may I count upon? This is an aid extraordinary for the King and so it shall be honoured."

"Moneys, my lord?" the mayor cried. "Good St. Denis who hath money to lend, in Hampton now? We go bare and beggarly, so are we ruled."

"Sirrah, you speak like a traitor. Do you stand against the King's will?" The mayor did not choose to say so, but he grunted. "You have had many a good year by the King's favour for your town, you Hampton merchants."

He hath made you rich. By God's wounds, you shall give him aid in his need."

That was too much for the mayor. "And by God's body, my lord, you speak what you cannot make good. Shall give, quotha! I cry you mercy, we are free men in Hampton. And if we were slaves, we could not give what we have not. The King's favour hath made us rich? I swear by Romsey rood, Hampton Town hath not been so poor in fifty year as now it is. We have lost the traffic of the war in France, we have lost the trade with Normandy and the Gascon wine, now the port is shut upon wool and we are to lose the Flemish ships. Oh, all is well and wisely done, I doubt it not. I serve the King and will ever uphold him. But when you tell me these policies make us rich, it is something too much to bear. Hear a plain word, my lord. There is no man in Hampton hath a mark to spare from his present need, so hath the King dealt by us."

"Out on you, knave, would you deny your King in his danger? This it is to pamper a churl. You are grown bold and insolent, Robert Aylward. Have a care. He that made you can unmake you. I think King Henry needs a new mayor in Hampton."

The mayor stood up. "Find him, I pray you, find him," he puffed. "What man is there in Hampton will do your will? I know him not. Will you have the beggar-boy you thrust into our guild? Ay, take him, my lord. He should serve you well."

And so they parted, each in a rage and each afraid that he had gone something further than he meant. For the constable, a knight of the old order who lived by his lands, despising merchants and townsfolk, knew that he knew nothing of Hampton trade and could not tell where to find a man who would help him if Aylward failed. And the mayor, determined to risk no money of his in aid to the King's doubtful fortune and very certain that he could not command any other man's money, saw clearly that it would not serve him to be cast out of his mayoralty—that matter of the wool had gone so far that he had hardly a friend

left in Hampton, only the constable's power held up his head, and unless he could hold on till times changed he would be a broken man.

So each set himself to find some way of gaining his own ends without open war. The mayor calculated his resources—too much was in the wool that he had bought cheap to hold till the ban was raised and sell dear, and it would be hard to borrow anywhere—but if the constable would grant him a month to sell wool overseas, if the constable would give him some great security, the thing might be contrived. The constable worked his mind to discover whether Aylward told the truth of these Hampton merchants, and having made nothing of his own men, who, honest country fellows, knew no more of trade than he, bethought him of the mayor's jibe about the beggar-boy. He, at least, was in the merchant guild, he was a cunning rogue, he had still his way to make and should be glad to serve my lord constable.

A woman took a message that my Lady du Pré would see Hugh Camoys' embroideries. At this Hugh was pen-sive: he had not expected the castle to remember his broideries just then: he was ill-pleased that the castle should remember him at all: but whatever the constable wanted of him, he dared not refuse to go.

The life of the castle was much changed since Warwick and his gay company were its guests. The gates were closed, Hugh was let in by a wicket, and a yeoman took charge of him and led him briskly to the keep. The courtyard had no parade of merry folk, but it was mighty busy with a clang of work on arms and armour, and a muster of raw countrymen in new coats of the constable's blue and black at exercise with bow and stake and bill. It seemed to Hugh that Rodolfo of Salerno had given him timely warning.

He was taken up to a chamber in the wall, where sat that waiting-woman of his acquaintance. "Here is a broiderer, Mistress Marion," quoth the yeoman, "asks for my lady."

"All is well, Simkin. I know of him. Get you gone."

"I am to wait for him below," said the yeoman, and he and his halberd went down the stair.

"God have mercy, here is care of me," Hugh smiled.

"How is it with you, sweetheart? Faith, you have thriven since you were here. You have kneces to your breeches. There will be no more beads for poor Marion now."

"But a dainty sweet perfume bag. There, it is right civet out of Spain. Put it in your bosom. Though, good faith, that hath no need of perfumes."

"Fie, what do you know of it? You are a naughty rogue. Have done, now, I must go to my lady"; and having let herself be kissed, she went.

My lady according to his expectation kept him waiting. He had grown weary of looking down at the raw archers' exercise, and indeed handling of arms was always dull work to him, when a small voice said "What have you to do here?"

He turned to see Christine du Pré. She, too, was changed. The little head had stood no higher than his elbow in the summer. Now it was up to his shoulder, or near by, and she was so slight that she looked even taller. She had been a child, now her straight blue dress showed a girl's bosom. But her face had still its delicate fragility, the manner of it and her dark eyes were wistful still. "Why have you come?" she said.

"I came because I was bidden."

"To sell your broideries." She looked at the pack on the table.

"It is true. But, alas, I have no honeysuckles now."

A faint flush moved in her checks. "I want no more honeysuckles."

"There be other things very noble"; he moved to the pack.

"Let be. I want nothing of you. Fie, should a man make broideries?"

"By your leave, I do not make them. I only sell them."

"Oh, that is better!" she cried. "That is work for a man indeed. He sells what he hath not the wit to make."

"You have said it. I must do as I can. Since God He made me to buy and sell, I sell and buy with good will."

"God!" she said with contempt. "Why do you always prate of God? You are worse than a priest."

"That am I. Else I would have been a priest, which once I hoped. But I found I was not worthy."

"You wanted to be a priest? I do not believe you."

"Woe is me, am I so wicked to look upon? I pray you, why should I not want it?"

She made a gesture, as if she were sweeping something away. "You know. You are not like a priest. You mock me. Come now, speak me true, will you be a pedlar all your days?"

"No, by God's grace. I will be a merchant and have a great long gown with fur on it and eat swans and fantasies."

"Like the rogue mayor. Ugh!"

"Master Mayor," said Hugh carefully, "is a great one in Hampton."

"I hate him," said Christine du Pré.

"God warn us, why?"

"Because he is a rogue merchant. All merchants are rogues and churls. Good faith, Hugh, why do you not go to the wars? All brave lads are going."

"God forbid!" said Hugh heartily. "But what tale is this, lady? I know no war."

"My father told me so. It is for the King against these wicked lords. My father will march with a great, noble company. I vow he would let you ride among his squires yet, if I asked for you."

"Oh, lady, what should I do among your pretty squires? I am a common fellow, who hath no gentleness?"

"You are well enough," said she with a toss of her head.

"Nay, and you can be gentle if you choose. I vow it is to mock folks when you are so rough and dull."

"I humbly thank your ladyship. But what should I do at the wars? I have no heart for it, nor any skill in arms."

"Ay, mock me!" she cried. "I know you can do bravely. Have I not seen. Hear me now. My father is a great captain, the King hath none better, every man of ours saith it, and those that march with him will have a fair way to honour. There will be knights in his train when he comes back that go forth squires and men-at-arms, they are assured of it."

"That I do not doubt," said Hugh gravely. "God bring them safe home."

"Sir Hugh Camoys," she said and laughed a little.

"Holy St. Denis!" Hugh was shocked. "That is not for me, lady."

"Why not you? I have heard my father say that knight who was with my Lord Warwick, Sir Giles de Roffa, he was a no man's son, he went to the wars a boy that groomed the packhorses. Look what honour he hath won."

"Sir Giles is very eager and bold. He is made to thrive by war. But I am Hugh Camoys."

"You could if you would. Hugh, have you forgotten that night on the ship? I have not."

"You are gracious, Lady Christine. Good faith, I did nothing but what came upon me to do, and it was the fall of the luck brought us off, none more surprised than I, I promise you, no man ever in more fear."

"Fie, how you go about to make yourself mean. I do not believe in you. You could do anything, if you had a mind."

Hugh shook his head. "But it is not so. What I can do, that I will heartily. And it is to buy and sell that men may have the goods they need."

"And be a pedlar all your days."

"A merchant, by your favour."

"A fat rogue, or a lean rogue, what matter?"

"I thank you. There be rogues in arms and rogues in the merchant guild. But by God's grace I will be none.

And to tell you my mind, lady, I think your merchant serves God better than your man-at-arms."

"God! God! God!" she cried. "How like a priest you whine. Whoever heard that a merchant had honour of any man? He lives but to grow fat like a pig, and like a pig men use him."

"Feeding upon him. So it is," Hugh smiled. "Will you eat me, Lady Christine?"

"I hate you," she said and flung out.

Hugh was something disturbed: wondering why he had been so roused as to speak for a moment his judgment on his world, a thing painfully worked upon and treasured in secret pride. Of all places to blurt it out none could be worse than the constable's castle, of all people to hear it none could despise it more than this proud, silly child. If she chose to make mischief with it, she might go near to destroy him. Why must she meddle? It could not be that they brought him to the castle to set her upon him. But what was he brought for? He had waited half the day.

He had still some time to wait before my lady came. There was no mystery about her. She was as cold and aloof as when first he saw her; she wanted nothing of him but his broideries, made her leisurely choice and left him bidding him wait. He had, to be sure, no intention of going. He was not paid.

When the curtain moved again, it was not her woman who came, but the constable. Hugh bowed low, bidding himself be slow and close. The constable sat down. "How goes it with you, boy? You have prospered, as they tell me?"

"By your lordship's favour."

"It is well. You have good trade in Hampton?"

"Alas! I dare not say so, my lord. It has been a hard year for all men."

"Yet you thrive," the constable said sharply. "Some men have money for rich broideries."

Hugh laughed. "Faith, my lord, a man may buy

broideries though he spend little. And little it needs to make me thrive. A small pot is soon filled."

"A cunning answer," the constable frowned. "Come, sirrah, why would you have me think the town is poor?"

"Why, sir, but you asked me and I must tell you. The thing is as it is. Ask any man."

"Boy, I never knew any time when merchants would not say they were poor."

"Your worship hath known more merchants than I," said Hugh meekly. "But so it is now: merchant or craftsman or mariner or porter, all will tell you the same. There is no money in Hampton this year."

"Why, how should that be? You have had many a year of good trade."

Hugh stared. "By my faith, sir, it is not so accounted. In the time that I know, I never knew easy days. Men say that it has never been well with Hampton since we lost France and the French wines. But now that no wool goes overseas all must spare and stint."

"Go to, this is a false tale. You Hampton folk take no hurt. You are not flockmasters. The wool is not yours. You do not lose if it is not sold."

Hugh scratched his head. "I pray you," he stammered, "give me leave—I do not know how to answer—I never heard the like. Why, look you, my lord, this is all wrong. I humbly ask your lordship's pardon."

"Speak out then, fool."

"By St. Denis, my lord, it is for wiser heads than mine, they would show you the reason of it. But the matter is some such as this. Our town of Hampton lives by buying and selling and the toil of mariners. When much goods go in and out we thrive. When we have nought to buy and sell, as in the lack of French wines, and now in this ban upon wool, then we wane and dwindle. Look you, our merchants can gain nothing on buying the wool and selling it again, they have no wool to give the foreign ships for spices and silks and other goodly merchandise,

they have no wool to load their own ships withal. And all the craftsmen that the merchants use and the mariners and the porters and labouring men they must stand idle. This it is to forbid us our honest trade."

"Out on you, rogue, you speak against the King."

"God is my judge," Hugh cried. "I have no thought of it nor will. My lord, you asked me a reason why the town was poor. Do me right, this is no plaint of mine."

The constable frowned. "Sirrah, you are a cunning rogue. Here is a speech thought upon and planned. You came armed against me."

"Holy St. Francis!" Hugh was horrified. "Oh, my lord, bethink you. It could not be. I was commanded here by your lady to bring broideries for her. I never thought to see your lordship. I could not think you would honour me to talk with me. And that you should ask me of Hampton merchants—good faith, that is beyond any man's guessing. I am all dizzy yet. Would to God I could speak to please your lordship. But when you ask me, I must even speak as true as I know."

The constable had wit enough to see that he was answered. "Well, do so," he said more calmly. "Look you, lad, I would trust you if I can. You have thriven by my good will."

"That I may not forget, my lord."

"Serve me honestly, then. Now your Hampton merchants, you dare not tell me they go poor. They have had losses may be, and it is ill-fortune. But they have had gains, there must be store laid by. And if they bought no wool this year, they have the money to hand waiting for use. Tell me fairly, lad, is it not so?"

"Why, my lord, I am not in any rich merchant's secrets——"

"So there be rich merchants yet?" the constable laughed.

Hugh smiled, too. "It is very like Master Mayor could tell you of one and another, my lord. I think he and his friends are not beggars yet."

"So you come to it! Master Mayor and his friends—and here and there another?"

"I think there be not many. But I would say yea, my lord."

"If I bade you tell me a man who hath money to lend to the King what man would you say?"

"I have said one man, my lord. He is the chief of all."

"Your mayor, Aylward? And if I do not choose him?"

"Why, my lord, I cannot tell. But it is my thought that if Master Mayor can find no moneys for the King, there is none other will."

"The time comes when all true men must aid the King, lad. I would have Hampton do loyally."

"God help us, my lord, is this war?"

"It is to give the King strength against the treason that threatens. Have you heard nothing, Hugh Camoys?"

"My lord, I have heard a tale there will be war before the corn is ripe. God defend us!"

"What else do men say in Hampton?"

"Why, my lord, much more than I can tell, but there is talk abroad that my Lord of York and my Lord Warwick seek to be of the King's Council, which is denied them. I pray you, is that the quarrel?"

"That and more. They seek to rule the realm, lad. Have you heard that in Hampton?"

"It is said. I think it has been said a long time. But this of war is new."

"And what do your merchants say of these traitor lords?"

"By my faith, they say little enough that I know but this, give us peace on Hampton quays."

"Right merchants! What is it to them if the King goes down?"

"Ay, my lord," Hugh murmured and shook his head.

"How say you?" the constable cried.

"I say but as you say, my lord."

"Look you, lad. It is my charge to bring aid to the

King from these fat Hampton purses. Do you know of men who will be loyal at need and give willingly? "

"I am but a poor lad, my lord, and the rich men are not my friends. But for what I know of them I dare not give you hope. I pray you, my lord, shall I speak my mind? "

"I bid you."

"As I think you have asked Master Mayor and he said you nay. What he would not do for the King none other will do, so it has gone in Hampton. And if you ask, this I think they will answer you, that they have nothing left."

"What, are you all traitors in Hampton? "

"Do not say so, my lord."

"I say as I find. What, rogue, shall I tell the King—I have guided the town so ill he has no friends in it? "

"God forbid, my lord. This might be said, so has the town been hurt by loss of trade that men cannot give."

"Cannot? Will not! You had rather be ruled by Warwick. God reward you, base faithless knaves you are."

"I pray you, my lord, be not angry with me. I am a man of nought but by your favour. But the truth is the town hath no zeal for war for any sake. So shall you find."

"Ay, tell that to Warwick when he comes to flay you."

"I pray God better fortune. But sure, my lord, this might be said, Hampton did him no hurt, what ill should he do Hampton? So is he answered."

"Out upon you, rogue, would you teach me treason? "

"Here is none but plain truth, my lord. Of your grace, think of it again."

The constable stared into mild and steady eyes. "You—you bid me think!" he muttered, and as he thought he flushed and his breath came fast. It was granted him to understand. Amazement passed into rage. "I am to tell the King Hampton can give him no aid, it is poor and if the traitors conquer crave their good will I did them no harm. I!" Rage strangled his speech.

"So a man might be safe, my lord, let it go as it will," said Hugh meckly.

Then the constable stormed at him and swept out and a little after came the waiting-woman and tossed him money and bade him pack and go and pulled a face at him. It was borne in upon him that he had made enemies in the castle at Hampton.

CHAPTER X

AN ILL WIND

TO his bed that night Hugh Camoys took a strange, uncomfortable sensation. He felt that he had been foolish. What brings to many men comfort in such a case, the conviction of being too good for a wicked world and righteous wrath at its ingratitude, did not console him. He was indeed conscious that in his dealings with the constable he had sought only the good of that misguided man: to keep him out of trouble, to point him a way to safety. That was what annoyed him. His philosophy allowed him no excuse for doing the dangerous, unprofitable right. The most hazardous things might be dared if success would bear fruit. But there was no hope of gain in giving the constable good counsel. If by a miracle he listened and took it, he would still bear a grudge against the man who told him he had no power. But it was always sure he would not listen. He would go his own way, though all the saints tried to save him. It did not occur to Hugh that it might be the constable who was in the right. The loyalty which bound him to the King meant nothing to Hugh. That a man should be faithful to a master who was leading him to ruin was a point of honour that Hugh took for plain folly. A master's right, be he merchant or baron or king, was in his power to rule well. If he failed of that, men must forsake him and seek another. And the King had failed, witness the troubles of Hampton. He would fail and fall, Hugh had no more doubt of it, since the constable's fears and rage had betrayed the weakness of the King's side in the quarrel.

With such as the constable for the King and such as De Roffa and Warwick against him, the end was sure.

Then why must Hugh Camoys labour for my lord constable's good? A fool's trick. He denied any debt to the castle. He had done service and been paid. It was nothing to him how the house of Du Pré should fare. Yet there was no gain but blank loss in making my lord his enemy. Sir Ralph du Pré still had power enough and long might have to break Hugh Camoys. What a vain fool was Hugh Camoys to make him an enemy. Not like Hugh Camoys, either, such folly. What a plague was it that had led him on? The man was so dull and honest, so blind, so distraught in his silly loyalty, he was so sore in need, it seemed a Christian thing to help him. 'Pride, a fool's pride. He was not called to be a saint. A good Christian, if you please, but no more of this helping of others. Let St. Martin give away his cloak—and faith, he gave it to a beggar, not a lord, no such fool, he. Hugh Camoys was a poor lad who must help himself or the devil would help him.

So Hugh wrought with himself anxiously, deluded, indeed, by a sense of his own importance. For the effect of his eloquence on the constable was not such as he guessed and feared. The constable, like Hugh, spent some time in anxious thought that night, but long before the end of his meditations he had put Hugh Camoys out of his mind. For as soon as his first wrath that this beggar-boy whom he had set on horseback should presume to teach him policy was spent, he decided that the fellow was but a churl who thought as a churl; he should have known better than to turn to such a one, and it was beneath him to be angry. Yet something remained in his head of Hugh's opinions, for it was of a piece with his own first thoughts, if he was to get anything from Hampton the mayor must get it for him.

The mayor, who was well aware of that, had long debated with himself whether it would serve him to do nothing. He saw a chance that the constable might use the strong

hand and seize money and goods.' That was like to be sheer ruin, whatever came of it. Even though the town rose and made a fight his fortunes would go up in smoke. A wise man, to be sure, would not so call out enemies for the King, but the mayor had no trust in the constable's head. Even if he baulked at violence, he might make trial of another mayor and so leave Robert Aylward in the mire. That, indeed, might be endured if constable and King should soon go down. Then the good mayor who had been thrust out for giving no aid to their folly might come in again and stronger than before as the friend of my Lord Warwick. But that hope he soon dismissed. He did not believe that the King who had kept his crown while this great lord and that went to death would fall at Warwick's challenge. He measured Warwick by De Roffa, and counted De Roffa an evil, crafty fellow but of no substance, a braggart soldier. The end of it was, he must keep friends with the constable if he could. Something he would have to risk, but the risk might be made small.

In this amiable temper he waited for and obeyed another command to the castle. The conference, though not cordial, Sir Ralph being unable to hide his contempt for the mayor, passed in peace, for the mayor found Sir Ralph too proud to dispute terms which brought him money. So it ended in a promise of ten thousand marks for a mortgage upon all the lands of Sir Ralph du Pré whatsoever and wheresoever, and the mayor went away thinking the constable a fool, while the constable loathed the mayor for a usurer.

Such a thing could not be kept secret. The mayor had to borrow from others to make the money and give them assurance of security. Hugh heard of it from Dame Overey, who still had hopes of him as a son-in-law or, as the vulgar dared to jest, would have ventured with a young husband. But she need not here be suspected of any other motive than the belief that Hugh Camoys was a good man to follow. Hugh took the news coolly. Dame Overey judged that he thought both constable and mayor fools

for their pains, which, chiming with her own notions, persuaded her to tell her son he must put no groat of theirs in the business.

Doubtless Hugh did think them both fools, but the cool contempt which he showed to Dame Overey was no true picture of his mind. He was very angry. The constable offended every principle he had. It was bad enough that a man should choose the losing side in a quarrel and thrust himself into the fight. But to stake on it all that he had was wickedness of folly and so to stake that he wasted the better part, to bring in no more than ten thousand marks for all his power when he had broad lands—Hugh was revolted as though he saw a man at some loathsome sin.

Mortgage the lands of Du Pré, and to Robin Aylward, and get no more than ten thousand marks! Let him sell his soul to the devil for a penny. The man had no right to be so besotted. A man's estate should be a trust, like the talents in the gospel, to hold and make fruitful. And this man had wife and child. Let him go to the devil if he must, he was vile to take them, too.

Holy saints in heaven, he was warned, he knew a way to safety. As proud a fool as he was, who could have guessed he would turn from good counsel to this mad wickedness? So much for striving to help a man.

And his nature bidding him devise what this new thing required him to be, Hugh thrust down wrath. The constable would surely use his money to buy arms for those raw countrymen he had called to the castle, perhaps to furnish more arms for the King's levies. Well. If there must be war, men must have arms. That had been foreseen. That was provided for. If the constable must waste his substance let it come to safe hands. It was an ill wind that blew nobody good.

Hugh went from one to another of his smiths and armourers and set the price which they should ask when the constable sent out to buy arms, a high price, and each must sell as if the goods were his own, and of the high

price each should have his share. Hugh never muzzled the ox which trod the corn.

When the constable marched out with his men at that month's end, a great part of his ten thousand marks lay in the room of Hugh Camoys.

CHAPTER XI

THE KING MAKER

THE summer days went by and no news came to Hampton, by which Hugh was the most surprised man in the town. Older men had their memories of war and expected nothing to change the order of life, remembered an earlier quarrel between the King and the great lords which had flamed into a battle and died down again, consuming a lord on this side and a lord on that, leaving the King still King and his enemies still puissant. Men of his own youth gave no thought to the King's fortunes, having grown up to believe that the realm was nothing and their own private matters all in all. But Hugh, who may have been as selfish as any, had fumbled his way to a notion that how the realm was handled might make him or break him. He was yet young enough to look for swift great results of war, and he had persuaded himself that this war would be fought out, to leave Warwick master of the King or the King supreme.

Yet Hampton had heard nothing and went about its business as though nothing would change its ways. The first summer ships were sent out with their wonted freight of tin. Ships plied to and fro along the coast. But not one was laden with wool from the stored warehouses, though there was no power left in Hampton to enforce the ban. My lady in the castle had only enough men for a watch and a guard at her gate, the mayor could have found none to stand by him in a fight. Yet the merchants ventured nothing to mend their stunted trade, the town lay quiet, half idle and poor. It seemed to Hugh that

he lived among men who had grown content not to live.

He too went about his wonted business, but as far as he rode, heard no news. Village and town in the smiling south country cared nothing about war. There was easy talk of great lords away in the north mustering bowmen and billmen, horsed and harnessed, and the King and his fierce Queen gone out of London with all their favourites in arms. No man marked it more than a minstrel's tale. Life was merry in market and hall.

When he came one night to the Bag Inn, where he stabled his horse, Father Nicholas hailed him and bade him drink a cup. The good friar, by his rolling eye and his rotund speech, gave evidence that he had already drunk more than one and Hugh well knew that whoever drank with Father Nicholas paid the score, but he always desired to commend himself to holy Church and so smiled and called for two quarts of white ale.

"St. Francis look down upon you," said the friar. "But what ails you that you do not drink, child?"

"Nothing, I promise you."

"Thank God for it then. But look you, look you, here is my brother Barnabas with me."

"Two quarts and one quart more," said Hugh to the tapster, and looked and saw a little man, shining pink in the face, red of hair, who wore a gown cut like a friar's but of fine, smooth cloth such as no friar should wear and there were boots on his feet, red and pointed, and he had a great leather wallet in his lap.

"Brother Barnabas, here is my good son, Hugh Camoys, humbly bids you welcome. Do him honour in a cup of comfort."

"I kiss him with the kiss of peace," said Barnabas and kissed his tankard. He had a merry eye. "Sit by me, child." He made room on the bench. "I love the savour of youth."

"Fie, fie." Father Nicholas shook his head. "Here is no boy but the oldest head that ever grew o' green

shoulders. My Hugh is a merchant of Hampton Town, and hath good standing, brother, a wise, warm fellow, I warrant you. 'Tis we poor men of God who are the children here."

"Now I look in his eyes, I see it." Barnabas nodded. "Yea, brother, here is deep, brooding wisdom. A man who thinks upon the morrow. It is well. So a man thrives in the world, yea, and brings his soul safe to heaven. I pledge you fortune, good Master Camoys," and he emptied his tankard and Father Nicholas held up his finger to the tapster.

"And yours, my father." Hugh drank thriftily. "But the friar makes a mock of me and you. I am no more than a poor lad and he befriends me here and there that I may sell my broideries. His prior wears a cope of my mother's work. I pray you if you need the like think of me."

"Nicholas, I like this modesty, it is gracious." Barnabas reached for the other tankard. "Nay, Master Camoys, I need no broideries, nor any other things of this world; my merchandise is of the world to come. I have here," he tapped his wallet—"I have here a vial of the sweat of St. George which he shed when he fought the dragon, the virtue whereof is that whoso hath it can be overcome by no evil, nay, not by the fiend himself, and so must needs save his soul. This is a very holy and goodly relic," he cocked his bright green eye at Hugh.

"It is so indeed. I give you joy," said Hugh meekly. "How easy must life go with you who have nothing to fear alive or dead."

"Nay, my son, nay. An easy life I do not seek. I go my ways labouring for the help and comfort of this poor world, to save men from the bondage of their sins. Look"—he pulled out a parchment with huge seals upon it—"I have here a pardon which shall clean a man from sin though his hands be red with blood, and no penance done."

"God judge me, good father!" Hugh appealed to the friar, "I never did any man hurt in all my days."

"Sooth, sooth," Father Nicholas nodded over his tankard. "Yet who is without sin?"

"There is none righteous, only God, my brother," Barnabas agreed. "Here, then, is a pardon (and this at no heavy cost) which doth cleanse a man from the sin of hard dealing and usury and worldly gain."

"I pray you, sir, sell no such pardons in Hampton," Hugh cried. "Here is hard dealing enough and honest men are ill entreated."

"Alas, alas! who is honest in God's sight, my son?"

Hugh looked from one of them to the other. "Good faith, I cannot tell," said he, "yet each of us must do as he can."

"I see thee that thou art a hard man," Barnabas cried, "gathering where thou hast not strowed. Look you, I have your need. Here in my wallet is a pardon which shall absolve you of all charity and alms. It may save you many a mark, Master Camoys."

"God forbid," said Hugh. "That I do not seek. And it is my mind that neither God nor man grants that pardon."

"Barnabas, my brother, you will do nothing with this one," Father Nicholas chuckled. "I told you so."

"How do you call him? A merchant? Out on him, he is cunning as a friar."

"I pray you, master pardoner, do you make good trade?" said Hugh.

"I thank you, master merchant, all men be not so righteous as you."

"Have you carried your wares far?"

"From Rome, sirrah. What is it to you? It is a poor town of humble folk, the Holy Father and such like."

"Fie, gentle words! But it is not of Rome I asked. Have you been near and far here in England?"

Barnabas leered and shook his head. "Master merchant, you would not buy when I was selling. Now you would buy, I do not sell."

"As you will. Call friends, father. The friar bids us both to supper."

"With all my heart," said Father Nicholas.

They were served with salted salmon and pickled ox tongue whereby the friar and the pardoner were enabled to do great deeds of drinking and the pardoner's heart opened and he made a mock of himself and his trade. Delicately Hugh led him on to tell of where he had been and what he had seen. He talked well, traveller's tales of the most wonderful, and many a good, broad jest, but he was hard to guide, he could by no device be brought to England till at last with a husky chuckle, "I know you, my master. You want news of London town," he said and winked. "Why, London bridge is broken down, dance over a lady, and that's the news from London town. What do you lack, what do you lack, my merchant? Come, then, I will tease you no more. Your ale is good ale and you make no stint. I like you well. There is merry work in London. My lord the King is out and my lord of Warwick is in."

"Good faith, it cannot be!"

"True as the neat's tongue is savoury. Hark you now. Comes talk in London of wars in east and west and south and north. Whereof little Barnabas he takes no heed but sells his parchment to man and wife. But my lord the King out goes he with his lady Queen in her golden hair (no such saint as he, I warrant her) and a brave company. Then swift and blithe comes in my Lord Warwick, for they open their gates to him when they see his banner and all the town is his but the Tower, and never had King more honour. So he must be off and away. Here is a mad, merry world. But give me peace, my merchant. Alack, alack, no man thinks of his sins when the world goes upside down each good day."

"I am not of your mind," said Father Nicholas. "No man is ever so good a Christian as when he cannot stand on his feet. This have I proved many times," and he hiccuped and reached for a tankard.

"I pray you, who stands in London now, the King or Warwick?" said Hugh eagerly.

"Why look you, the King is with Warwick and Warwick with the King," the pardoner laughed.

"Good faith, how can that be? Which is master?"

"Which is master when bear hugs man? So Warwick the bear hugs the saintly King. By Northampton town they met and my lord the King went to prayers and my lady Queen and her lords built a rampart and planted their guns upon it to consume Warwick and his merry men at their pleasure. But the rain came down and the matches went out and the powder would not burn and my Lord Grey he saw the hand of God in this and beckoned to Warwick and let his men in over the rampart. So the Queen is fled and her lords are spent and the King is caught at his prayers. Now the King and Warwick they ride together, and who is King I cannot tell; but who is master I know right well: down derry, derry derry down."

"That is a good song," Father Nicholas nodded. "That is a joyous sad song." He flourished his tankard and tried to sing scales and wept.

"Ay, it makes a good song," said Hugh, watching the pardoner with heavy eyes. "So are men spent and slain. God have mercy on their souls. But what else is done I do not know."

"Nothing, child, nothing," the pardoner laughed. "The sun will rise to-morrow and here is good ale to-night."

So Hugh called for more and left them drinking and paid the score and went his way home.

He was early at the house of the grey friars asking for Father Nicholas, who when he came blear-eyed and shuffling, spoke austerely. "Hugh Camoys, Hugh Camoys! Shall I have no peace from you? Here is wantonness. You wax fat and kick, boy. Think shame of yourself. You are become a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. You are corrupt. It is but a night since I found you in your cups and chastened you and here you come about our doors with the smell of strong drink upon you and your face aflame. Away, away. Mortify your naughty flesh. You offend. Purge and fast and live clean, or you shall be with Dives."

"Is your head so heavy?" said Hugh meekly. "I know a balm for that."

"Oh, villain," the friar gulped. "Here is no place for your lewdness." He clutched Hugh's arm. "Fie! can you not walk soberly yet? Come away. What is in your naughty mind?"

"A work of charity, my father."

"Mock not, mock not. Speak me plain."

"Why then, call it a pint of sack."

"It is well said. It is the very marrow of the need." But when they turned into Hugh's house and Hugh thrust him on to the ladder stairway, he turned and rolled his bloodshot eyes. "Up?" he groaned. "God have mercy, child, all that is in me cries down. What wickedness is this?" Hugh set him to it and with Hugh's shoulders hoisting him he made shift to climb. In the little room above he sank on the bed and groaned and held his head. "God forgive you, for I cannot." Hugh ministered to him in a cup of sack. He stared about him. "Good faith, child, do you keep your cellar here? A mad world. What, should a man climb to drink? It is not right nor reason."

"No, but to do secretly. Good father, I would have you write for me."

The friar held out his cup for more sack and when he had drunk again said "Write! What ails you not to write yourself? I taught you."

"And I shall thank you for it all my days. But you must write for me now. This letter must not come from me."

"What wickedness is this?" the friar chuckled.

"It is a deed of charity. Write, I pray you. 'Lady—the King's battle is lost and all is broken. For your lord's honour and the love of his child go you presently to sanctuary. There is none other help.'"

The friar stared at him and wrote painfully with a shaking hand. "God forgive me," he said. "I have not writ so ill since I was young and merry. This is right secret. There

is none will know this writing, child. Yet it may be read." He stared at Hugh again. "This is to my Lady Du Pré, child?" He wrote the name and Hugh took the paper and sealed it with a shilling while the friar watched him curiously. "I have known you all your days and yet I know you not, Hugh Camoys. Tell me, what profit is in this?"

"If her lord stood against Warwick and fell, what has he earned for her and her child? What is there for her? Only sanctuary."

"Nay, I trust no great man's mercy. There is no mercy but among the poor. I did not ask of her part. It is well and wisely written, but what is in it for Hugh Camoys?"

"Nought but a danger. Therefore my hand writes it not nor takes it. That is for you, my father," Hugh smiled. "Be comforted. I care for Hugh Camoys well."

"I thank my God I need not care for poor Nicholas. I will take it and blithely. But by my faith, I fear for you, child. You begin to ride two horses."

So the warning went to the castle and day by day Hugh watched to see if my lady would be guided. But she stayed within her walls. Men of more account than the pardoner came into Hampton with news of the battle and confirmed his tale. It was true, the King's array was broken utterly, and the lords who were his captains slain and fled to hiding, and he had no friend that held up his head. But where the Constable of Hampton lay no man knew. With the King all was over: he lived indeed, but he was a prisoner without honour, and his uncle, my Lord of York and his cousin Edward of March, were to have the crown and the pomp; but it was well seen that Warwick, whom they called in London the King Maker, would rule all at his will.

With these tidings the town was well pleased, for Warwick was accounted a good friend to merchants and mariners, and they trusted him to give them back their trade. But the mayor shut himself up in his house and was to be seen of none.

Days grew into weeks and my lady still held her castle, but the constable did not come back to her, nor any of his company, nor any word of him. All things in Hampton were as they had been, but that some bold merchants began in hope to fit out ships long laid upon the mud. Of the new rule in the land there was no sign and Father Nicholas sought out Hugh to preach his faith that in this world nothing endures and nothing changes and he is the wise man who never strives nor hopes nor fears: which seemed to Hugh saying that light was dark and a man could not see in it.

But the man who was Captain of Calais and master of the narrow seas had not forgotten the port of Hampton. Hugh was coming back from Salisbury market when he heard of a great company on the Hampton road. He pushed on fast and was at the cross before them. They wore red and white, they bore the bear and ragged staff. Hugh watched them pass and counted till he was tired of it. He had never seen so many men under arms, and these were lusty and richly appointed. Warwick had grown in strength. The banner went by, and a little behind it Warwick himself, smiling and debonair in talk with De Roffa. Hugh took off his cap. De Roffa's roving eye caught that and he turned in the saddle. Hugh saw the lean, hard face intent upon him, questioning. He laughed and waved his cap. De Roffa smiled, lifted his hand, turned again to Warwick.

Hugh followed them discreetly far behind. They rode at the open North Gate, none challenging, and through a crowd that cheered came to the castle. That gate was closed against them and there was a halt while De Roffa made his way to the front. But he was smooth and courteous. "Good fellow, say to my Lady Du Pré that my Lord of Warwick greets her well, and being come to Hampton on the King's service, asks leave to speak with her." In a little while the gate was opened and Warwick went in with only two squires of his company, and after some while longer one came out again and spoke with De Roffa

and the column filed into the courtyard and the gate was shut upon them.

Then Hugh turned and slowly made his way home, heavy with thought and sorrowful. That lusty company marching in upon the woman and her child seemed to him the ugliest sight he had seen. Yet of all women he had liked none less than my Lady Du Pré, and he liked her no better for her sorrows. What right had a woman who would not be guided to be piteous? What could a man do for her? Nay, or God Himself?

While he sat at his house door in the cool of the evening Osbern Shirley came by, grown sturdier and mighty fine. "What, old Hugh!" he stopped. "How is it, lad?" He made a bow to Eleanor Camoys (he was always careful of courtesy to women). "God save you, mistress."

Hugh stood up to greet so great a man. "Why, Osbern, this is kind. Good faith, I should not have known you. I vow you are taller by an ell and as much more about the chest. And you go as rich as my lord now. That is a noble fine cloak indeed." It was, for Osbern had risen too high to wear his master's colours; his cloak was red and lined with golden silk.

But he did not like this greeting. "Out on you, you are not a tailor to measure me and my cloak!" he cried. "I am well enough. How is it with you?"

"Not so ill and not so well. We have meat to our dinner. But trade is slow and heavy in Hampton and time does not mend it."

"You and your trade!" Osbern laughed contempt. "Come drink a cup of wine with me and be merry, lad." He took Hugh off arm in arm.

"You have been at the war, Osbern?" said Hugh meekly.

"That have I. As my ribs can tell. There was a rogue northern archer as we broke in over the stockade at Northampton thrust up with a hunting spear at my lord, but I came before him and the point went in beside my breastplate and seared me from belly to armpit before I cut him

down. I was as full of blood as a cask of wine when they took my armour off that night. But the rogues had paid for it. The river was swollen with their dead."

"Glory to God!" said Hugh. "You saved my lord's life! Good faith, he will make a great fortune for you, Osbern."

"Old Hugh!" Osbern pinched his arm and laughed. "It is no such matter, lad. I did only what a squire must do."

"There was none but you to do it. This is noble. You are a great one with him now, I warrant you."

"My lord is a good master," said Osbern.

"It was a happy day for you when Sir Giles came walking in the salt marsh.

"Why, not the worst. De Roffa hath been much my friend."

To Hugh's ear his tone had changed. Hugh slid away from the subject of Sir Giles de Roffa. "That must have been a fierce, bloody battle, Osbern," he said in a low voice of awe.

"By my faith, it was hard fought but a little. Then a slaughter. They had none to lead them. They were base, hireling churls. Nay, who could fight for King Henry puling in his tent? The man should be a shaveling monk. There is no knight of honour could choose his cause."

"They say my lord constable went to the battle."

"Ay, that did he: and he comes not home again. He stood till he was slain, he and his. God rest him! But what a plague took him there? There is good blood wasted. He had no call to meddle. He was not of these minions that King Henry fed. My lord had no quarrel with him."

"Please God, my lady will not suffer for it," said Hugh softly, but to that bait Osbern did not rise. "We shall see a new constable in Hampton," and still Osbern was silent. He walked on steadily and Hugh had begun to wonder how far they were going for their wine, when

Osbern turned him out of High Street and knocked at the castle gate. "Why, what is your will?" Hugh cried.

"Here is my tavern, old lad," Osbern laughed as the wicket opened. "Nay, go in, you shall have your wine, I promise you."

But his promise was broken. He took Hugh up to a little chamber in the keep and sent his own man for a flagon of wine and after waiting went himself to come back swearing daintily with tankards of small ale. "God forgive him, he kept poor cheer, our constable. They vow there is scarce wine enough for my lord's own table."

"There is scarce a tun of wine in all Hampton," said Hugh dolefully. "So has our trade fallen."

"Go hang your trade! Well, lad, here is all kindness."

"With all my heart." They drank together.

"Now hark in your ear. The truth is, old lad, I am bidden bring you to talk with De Roffa. He hath some charge about you Hampton folk. It is his work to do all my lord's small business. Speak him fair. He purrs to that," Osbern laughed wise contempt.

"Holy St. Denis, I would not cross him, not I," Hugh said in a hurry. "I pray you, Osbern, what would he have of me?"

"Oh, some news of the town. He watches townfolk everywhere. Come."

Hugh was taken to a room by the hall where De Roffa sat with candles and many parchments. "Ha, my lad of the broideries! Sit you down." The lean face grinned. "Give us leave, my lord Osbern." And Osbern went out with something of a swagger. "So you rode out to watch us, Master Hugh?"

"Good faith, I have watched long. I bade you welcome from my heart."

De Roffa chuckled. "When I saw your heavy brow I thought it was a warning. My soul sang in me when your worship waved us on. You are gracious to us, master Hugh."

"Sir, I think you mock me," said Hugh sadly.

"Oh, no, no, no. I am humbly grateful. It is much that you have not forgot us, which I had begun to fear."

"Sir, I wrote when I could find trusty messengers. I pray God you had the letters."

"The letters were well enough. What happened in Hampton was not so well. I cannot make it fit the letters, master Hugh. Here is Hampton (in your letters) turbulent and fierce against the constable. And here with the King is the constable bringing a great company. Tell me, sirrah, if you had Hampton buzzing about his ears, how was he free to muster men and march lightly away?"

"Good faith, sir, no man of Hampton marched with him. They were his own men, country folk all."

"You wrote of trouble enough in Hampton to hold him here."

"Sir, I wrote the truth. There was such trouble that his yeomen fought the mariners on the quays and the craftsmen in the streets and thereafter he drew in his men and lived in the castle as it were besieged." Hugh paused and considered De Roffa gloomily. It was hard to tell what thoughts were behind that grinning face. He decided to venture something more. "My lord constable was angry and bitter against us, calling us base greedy churls and traitors. For it was his purpose to man ships and hold the seas for the King, and no man of Hampton would do a hand's turn for him."

"Ships?" said De Roffa quickly. "Ay, when was that?"

"At the turn of the year," Hugh ventured, watching him, "but it went about that if our ships could not carry our wool, our ships could not serve the King."

"That was well thought upon," De Roffa smiled, and Hugh, who had just thought of it, also admired his wit. For it was plain that if the constable had had ships out in the Channel they might have harried Warwick's shipping from Calais where his base was. "Well thought on, in faith," De Roffa went on, "but this puzzles me, master

Hugh, if Hampton was set against him why did Hampton give him money for his cause?"

"Money, my good lord?" Hugh gasped. "Give him money? I know not a man in Hampton who has money to give for any cause, so ill do we fare since——"

"Yea, yea, no merchant ever has money. It is well known. Yet some men in Hampton found your constable money to arm his men and bring good gold to the King's chest. What does your worship know of that?" He rose as he spoke and waved his hand at Hugh, who scrambled up and turned to see Warwick in the doorway.

"What, you have found your familiar, Giles?" Warwick smiled.

"God save your lordship," Hugh murmured.

Warwick looked him over. "I have seen your face before. Why, are you not the lad that saved my lady's child from the Portugal pirates? The lad that would be a merchant!"

"By your favour, my lord."

"Yes, faith," said De Roffa, "and the constable's."

"A foot in both camps, has he? You did not tell me this was your man. Well, let us hear him." Warwick took De Roffa's chair.

"He stands the question," De Roffa grinned. "He labours to tell me how it is that Hampton, loving you well, furnished forth the constable with moneys against you."

"Good faith, my lord, that is no labour, for it was not so." Hugh was ready and at his ease. "He sought money as he had sought ships to use against you."

"Ships, ha?" said Warwick.

"Sir Giles is advised of that, my lord," said Hugh, and De Roffa scowled. "He asked an aid extraordinary for the King. But not a mark would Hampton give. The town would not lift a hand against you, my lord. For the truth is, our hopes are steadfast in you that you will give us back our trade."

"I thank you. You are kind," Warwick laughed, "but it was he had your money."

"I take you to witness, my lord, the mayor of Hampton is not one whom the town chose. He was put upon us by the constable and the King and maintained against our will. We are not to answer for him. Sir Giles knows our mayor." Hugh looked at him meekly.

"Yea, I know an ass when I see one," said De Roffa. "He is nought."

"Sir, it is you to judge. When my lord constable found that the town would give no money to use against you he advised with Master Mayor and the mayor furnished him richly, taking a mortgage on the constable's land for his surety. Thus came the money that did you hurt."

"A bold tale, my merchant," said De Roffa. "And a cunning rogue are you."

"God have mercy, my lord, why should you say so?"

"I know you, get you gone," De Roffa cried, and Hugh made a humble, lingering departure. He hoped for a word from Warwick.

But it was not till he was gone that Warwick spoke. "He hath reason, Giles. Why should you say so? It is not bold nor cunning, that I see. If it were false, we should know soon enough. We must put this mayor to the question."

"Oh ay. The mayor must be the rogue and pay for all. That is what this honest lad designs."

"God's body, the lad is your own man. You chose him to keep a watch for us. What ails you with him now?"

"He is not with us. He works for himself. He would rise by you and do nothing to serve you. What is all this tale? He covets the mayor's place."

Warwick laughed. "Oh Giles, my friend, how often have I heard you talk of a lad so. Who was the last? Osbern?"

"Well, and if it were?" said De Roffa sullenly.

"Why, there is another you found and he was well enough till he began to thrive."

"It is true, my lord, I like no servants who do not serve."

"Nor I neither," said Warwick sharply, and left that to smart.

To Hugh the world seemed in a difficult confusion. He had reckoned that he might have some trouble with De Roffa, but hoped to manage him, and having satisfied him to enjoy the patronage of his lord. Discord in the house of Warwick was outside his calculations. It appeared to him that he had satisfied Warwick and increased the suspicions of De Roffa, an achievement of which he could not guess the consequence, but foreboded no good. Which was to be the master? He had rather serve De Roffa than Warwick. De Roffa might have the harder heart, but his head was harder too and Hugh always inclined to the side of the better brain. But he dared not take either side. He could not tell how much of a quarrel there was between them. De Roffa was still in authority. Warwick's way with him was friendly still. It was rather he who had grown cold. But Osbern, the thriving favourite, would not have spoken contempt of him unless Warwick had given the cue. Yet De Roffa could not be lightly overthrown or put aside. He knew too much, he was too able, he would be too dangerous an enemy. But if they were at odds, they would make queer work. And how should a poor lad contrive not to be broken between them? Pray God, he had done himself no hurt that night. A wicked, cruel tangle they spread for him, and no help to them in it. If only men would look clearly to their own gain, what an easy world it would be!

But in spite of his fears he had done well enough. In the morning Warwick sent for the mayor, who came with a fawning speech of welcome which was broken by De Roffa: "Who bade you speak? My lord did not bid you speak."

"I pray you, let him go on, Giles. No man should hang unheard," said Warwick gently.

"My good lord, you are merry with me," the mayor stammered.

"No, faith. I never saw a man made me less merry.

Tell me, sirrah, what should a man have but hanging that makes war in this realm ? ”

“ Amen, my lord, amen. I pray you give us peace.”

“ That will I by God’s help, doing justice on them that break the peace. What man was it furnished the constable with moneys to arm his men ? ”

“ I—I know nought of arms, my lord. I am a merchant and mind my trade.”

“ You are a rogue and you lie. There was no man in Hampton found him money but you.”

“ My lord, my lord, you do me wrong. Good St. Denis, I never meddled with arms in all my days. I pray you, hear me. The matter is this. My lord constable came to me as other men have come and would have me lend him moneys upon the surety of his lands. This indeed I did in the way of trade, taking a mortgage. This is all, I swear by Romsey rood. But as for arms, I know nought, nor ever knew that he thought of levying war.”

“ Of all which, this only is true, that you made Sir Ralph mortgage his lands to you in his need. A merchant are you,” said Warwick. “ But I think you will have no profit in this venture, master merchant. Go, bring me that mortgage.”

“ My lord—nay, hear me. I have done no ill. This is——”

“ Your own mouth condemns you. You furnished him money to take arms. God’s body, they that fought are dead, and you that sent them to fight, shall you live ? ”

“ Oh, my lord, I set no man on to fight, I swear it. I knew nothing of it. I——”

“ Get you gone.” Warwick waved him away, and when he was gone, “ Faugh, I never had a better mind to hang a man.”

“ He is not worth it,” De Roffa shrugged. “ Let him be, my lord. We want no bloodshed in Hampton.”

Warwick laughed. “ What, Giles, when did you learn mercy ? ”

"Nay, kill the gentles, an it please you, they bear no fruit; spare the common folk, they are our harvest."

"I thank you for the sermon, holy father. We will humbly do your will. But faith, you might be meeker. You were wrong about our lad of the broideries. He was honest with us, my friend. As I had the honour to tell you."

"It is a shrewd fellow," De Roffa said smoothly. "I marked him long ago."

"Well done!" Warwick laughed. "Nay, you have an eye for a man, I have never denied it—till he begins to thrive. Well, let me have this rogue's mortgage when he brings it." He strode out.

De Roffa was not pleased. "You—you have thriven," he muttered. The wretched mayor, presenting the mortgage with lamentations that he was a ruined man and appeals for mercy, was told to hope for none and wait in guard.

Warwick was found at cards with Osbern Shirley, which did not sweeten De Roffa's temper. "At your leisure, my lord. Here is this parchment."

"You have read it, I suppose," Warwick did not look up from his hand. "What did he venture?"

"The fool borrowed ten thousand marks. If you please to remember, I counted he must have had just so much."

"Ay, ay. You are always right, Giles. But what did he pledge?"

"It is here written all his lands," De Roffa laughed. "God help him, he is better dead, He was too great a fool to be safe alive."

Warwick looked up. "All his lands—to get a poor ten thousand marks for the King! God rest his soul! He was loyal. Give it me." He took the parchment and frowned over it. "Ay, it is so." He looked up with a sneering smile. "Here is what we would not do, Giles, nor you nor I. Risk all to win a little help for another man's cause? Nay, we be no such fools. Osbern there—he might do it, eh lad?"

"Yes, faith, if he thought he might win," said De Roffa. "What was the constable's loyalty? He wanted to be a great man if the King conquered. He was so dull a fool he thought the King would conquer. Why should I honour him? I am as loyal as he, my lord. But I choose better the man I serve."

"None doubts that, Giles," Warwick laughed.

"And I risk all that I have, which is my life."

"God's body, here is fire! Never fear, man, you are not forgotten." Warwick went out with the parchment in his hand and De Roffa was left to see Osborn smiling at him.

My lady sat in her bower with a woman reading to her the history of the Holy Grail. Another woman stole in to say that my Lord Warwick begged leave to wait on her. She bent her head, stopped the reading and sighed, and drew her black gown about her and put her hands in her lap.

Warwick bowed low. "It is gracious in you to give me speech with you."

"You are master here, my lord. You told me so when you came."

"Of the castle. Not of your bower. I mean you all honour, as you shall find. The castle of Hampton must be a man's charge for the safety of the realm. But my Lady Du Pré shall lack no courtesy."

"I am to go?"

"When you will and as you will. I promise you, you shall be mistress in your house of Marwell as of old."

"It is kind in you to grant me what is my own."

"My lady, I pray you believe you have no enemy in me who was never your lord's enemy. If I had had my way with him, he would be constable of Hampton yet."

"If he had joined with you," she said fiercely. "Sir Ralph was loyal to his King, my lord."

"Ay, loyal and true, God give him peace. A man must do as it is shown him, lady. I may have my loyalties too."

But this you shall not deny me, to be loyal to the man I called friend."

"I seek nothing of you, my lord, and need nothing. I will go to my own house when you let me go."

"At your own pleasure. This only I would have you know, what was his is yours and your daughter's and no man hath any right against you."

"Oh, I am to thank you that you do not rob us! Nay, this is loyal indeed."

"You were never in danger of me. But there is a rogue here in the town pretends to a bond upon all the lands of Du Pré which he had from your lord in his need. Do you know of that, lady?"

She flushed and her hands worked together. "There was none in Hampton would give aid," she said. "He must needs go to some wicked usurer."

"Have no fear," Warwick smiled. "That usurer is well contented. See here is his bond." He gave it to her, let her read, and crushed it and tore it. "If any trouble you, I pray you let me hear of it. My arm is long and there is weight in my hand."

He made her another bow and went out conscious of nobility.

But he had still to explain himself to De Roffa who, having found where he had gone, waylaid him as he came out, and, falling into step with him across the courtyard, asked what was to be done with the mayor.

"I have done with him," said Warwick.

"Well, you have him here waiting on your will."

"Give him a rope to hang himself."

De Roffa laughed. "You are in a high style, my lord. I pray you let me have it plainer. The man loses mayoralty and mortgage and goes free? Is that his sentence?"

"God's body! he is lucky to escape so."

De Roffa shrugged. "Well, he is no matter. He could do us neither good nor hurt. And what is your will with this mortgage?"

"There is no mortgage."

"God's body! she is lucky to escape so." De Roffa gave him back his words with a laugh. "You are generous, my lord. I hope the lady is grateful."

"What is it to you?" said Warwick fiercely.

"It is as it may be. If I am to be your constable in Hampton, I would know what to look for from the house of Du Pr  ."

"She is a broken woman. She will not trouble you."

"She has a daughter."

"A child with a nurse!"

"A child is soon a woman when she is an heiress. Hungry men see to that. And an heiress you have made her, setting her free of this mortgage. I wish you have not raised up enemies for us."

"I have taught her to look to me," said Warwick.

"And who will teach a girl to look with her mother's eyes?"

"Out on you, you are a churl. There is noble blood in them. They will be faithful."

"Rest you fair," De Roffa grinned. "This is noble, this is romance. Well, they will look to you and I will look to them. Does she stay here in the castle?"

"Your lordship is not to be troubled. She goes to her own house presently."

"To Marwell. Well, it is not so far but a man can see."

"God's body, what ails you that you are so fearful? You see danger everywhere now, and none is honest, none trusty. The time was when you never counted a risk and would use all as friends."

"Ay, when we were down; when we set our lives on a cast. Now we are up and have the realm to keep, now I would be wary."

"You will keep nothing if you give nothing," said Warwick. "Open your heart, man. You will never rule if you make none glad of you."

"They shall be glad of me who do me right, my lord."

On that with a show of friendship they parted and De Roffa set the mayor free and sent him home quivering with

joy that he had saved his neck, a broken man. He was numbly aware of ruin, yet grateful. That Warwick had dealt with him cruelly he could not feel. Warwick was a great lord and a conqueror, and such as he must pay for the strife of their masters.

It was Hugh Camoys, alone of all men in Hampton, who felt that the mayor had been wronged. When Osbern told him all the story over a merry tavern supper as an example of Warwick's noble heart and a good jest against a greedy rogue, he answered with simple wonder and applause. But his mind pronounced Warwick the worse rogue of the two. It was not Hugh's way to deny that an enemy could have any right. He despised the mayor, hated him as much as he had it in him to hate. The mayor had used his patron vilely. He deserved to suffer. But not to lose all. Ten thousand marks of his had gone to the constable, good honest money, and it was not for Warwick to deny him his right to be paid. Let him be the worst rogue out of hell, his own was his own. He had been cruelly dealt with. If Warwick wanted to make favour with my Lady Du Pré let him pay the money from his own purse. A gracious, lordly deed to be generous at another man's cost! God save his nobility! And the wretched mayor must be broken to do him pleasure. Ten thousand marks gone! Who could stand such a loss? Robin Aylward was rich, he had brought other men in to furnish his ten thousand marks, but they must come upon him for their share. The poor rogue was stricken deep.

Hugh Camoys, as he would have said, was no saint to pour out his substance for an enemy; suffered no temptation to charity. The man had gone his own roguish way and must suffer. But in the way of trade Hugh was well inclined to give help. The wool which the mayor had bought up cheap lay still in his warehouse unsold, unsaleable. Hugh set on the house of Overey to buy it for him at something above what the mayor had paid. He had small doubt that with Warwick in power, the ban would soon be lifted, wool going overseas again and the price

rising. He was likely to do well in buying. But no one else would buy, so poor and timid were Hampton merchants grown, so anxious over the future, and the mayor grasped eagerly at relief to his necessities.

But when De Roffa came out from the castle with yeomen and a herald made proclamation on the quay that by ordinance of the council the trade in wool was free to all lands oversea, the mayor was not grateful to Master Overey for buying of him and swore it was a foul trick for his ruin. He was not heeded. His day had gone by.

Hugh watching him slink home, a lonely man, remembered him in his power and pomp and how hard he drove poor folk : how he made Eleanor Camoys work for a pittance and harried her son : but remembered without malice or pride. It cost Hugh no struggle to forgive his enemies when they were beaten. He was not so sure of what was to come that he felt proud of what he had achieved. He feared De Roffa and Warwick. Singly or in conflict or in conjunction, he would not count on them.

He had thought to keep De Roffa's favour and failed. He had believed that Warwick would show no mercy to the house of Du Pré and been proved wildly wrong. All this he confessed, reproachfully frank with himself, and owned that he could not see his way. Who was to be constable of Hampton ? What would he exact of the town ? What did Warwick intend by setting the lands of Du Pré free of their debt, what did he want of the mother and the child ? What was in his mind, what manner of man was he under his grand show, this King Maker ?

CHAPTER XII

THE MANOR HOUSE

SOME of the questions were soon answered. De Roffa dealt with the town, calling the merchant guild together to harangue like one having authority; constable, ay, and more than constable, though he did not say so. There was no fault to find with what he said: he swore by the ragged staff (significant oath) that Hampton merchants should find no let or hindrance to their trade and urged them be bold and venturous and make the town thrive again. He named for mayor a solid, quiet man who had no enemies and vowed to uphold him and maintain the liberties of Hampton. "I have done. I will see to it none shall mar you. But I cannot make you. That is your part. Go and prosper." So he ended. And it was agreed there had been no such constable in Hampton since Harry of Agincourt was King.

Then came a day when trumpets pealed from the castle and the great gates opened and my lady and her daughter rode out with a little company of their own folk and a great guard of Warwick's men, and while some whispered that she was sped and Warwick was carrying her off to lie in ward in some castle in the west, the rumour ran that she was going of her own free will to her own house and the guard was only for her honour. Therewith the town chose to be delighted, though my Lady Du Pré had never made a friend in it, and praise of Warwick's noble heart was loud in every tavern.

But still Hugh Camoys did not see his way through the future. He would not hoard up what he had and let

ventures wait till he could count on safety. There was too much work to his hand. All the wool that he had bought of the mayor cried to be sent overseas and sold before the new crop was in Hampton. The foreign ships must not come and make their profit of a glut. It was hard enough to find Hampton shipping ready for a voyage, so many craft had been laid up. De Roffa was busy about the yards to fit out the King's ships which had lain long in neglect and bargain for more to be built. There was many a chance for a man to make a profit dealing in timber and canvas and all manner of shipwrights' goods, and not many did Hugh Camoys miss. But the back of his mind was always pondering on the fortunes of Christine Du Pré and her mother, and at last he took horse and rode out to Marwell.

It was a torrid summer day. Though he loved the sun like a true-born townsman he was glad to climb away from the parched sandy levels to the chalk. Though the higher air had no more life, it seemed cooler on the firm swell of the turf, and the scent of the thyme as his horse bruised it quickened his drowsy mind. He was alone, but for the rabbits that fled from him and the fleeting shadows of the birds. He felt it in him to sing

Of one that is so fair and bright
Velut maris stella,
Brighter than the day is light,
Parens et puella :
I cry to thee, thou see to me ;
Lady, pray thy Son for me,
Tam Pla,
That I might come to thee,
Maria.

Whereat a dog began to bark, and a girl's voice laughed, "Hush, Lion, be still. But what priest is this comes singing lauds ?" The dog rushed upon him, a small shaggy lapdog in a fury. Where a little hollow of the hill made shade he saw my Lady Du Pré sitting and Christine stood by her side. "Lion, come hither," she cried. "Holy father,

go sing your Ave Maries in church. Mercy o' me, it's the pedlar boy."

By that, Hugh was out of the saddle and his cap in his hand. "I pray you pardon. God send your ladyship good days."

My lady looked cold surprise. "What brought you here, sirrah?"

"I came seeking your ladyship—in my humble wise."

"With broideries to sell?"

"It is true there are certain broideries," he said slowly and shuffled his feet.

"I want none, fellow." She smoothed her black gown, glanced at her daughter's white. "You are shameless."

"I pray you, do not say so," his eyes met hers steadily. "Not till you have heard me, lady." He glanced at Christine. "They are strange and rare, by my faith."

"Out on you," Christine cried. "Look to your horse, boy. The poor beast is jaded and wet. Take him to stable, for God's sake."

"If it please your ladyship?" Hugh said meekly. She waved her hand.

"Go and sing no more," Christine laughed.

He mounted and rode to Marwell Hall, a house of white stone built after the days of the castles, without wall or keep, and when he had persuaded the grooms to look to his horse and the buttery to give him a draught of ale took up his pack and went down the green slopes again.

Christine could be seen from far off in her white gown. She was wandering on the hillside alone. She chose to meet him. "Well, boy, what do you bring us?"

"Noble work, lady; I pray your kind favour for it."

"Fie, what a life is yours!" she laughed.

"It is true, I have been most fortunate," said Hugh modestly.

"Oh, blessed are the meek, blessed are the poor in spirit," she cried. "Is it a life to peddle needlework?"

"It is a living, lady."

"Out on you, a hen that scratches in the dust could say as much."

"To the hawk that swoops on her chickens."

"Ay, and kills them and still she scratches the dirt. You came to us selling your broideries while my father was lord of Hampton and the King ruled in peace. And again you came when the King was fighting for his realm and my father armed to march with him, and still you must be selling broideries. Now my father is fallen and dead and the King is a prisoner, and here are you with your broideries for us to buy. Scratch in the dust, hen!"

"Bitter words, lady. God give you comfort."

"Dare to pity me!"

He thought she was going to strike him and stood still. "Lady Christine, it is little I have done for you, yet nothing but good. What would you have? Men must work for you that you may live as a rich knight's daughter. That is my part; I serve you as I can."

"Serve me! I want no such service. It is not a man's work to sell broideries."

"You must go fine and fair, Lady Christine. It is my part to furnish you with the best. Look——"

"You have the smoothest tongue ever I knew," she cried and stamped her foot. "I hate you."

And smoothly Hugh went on. "Look, here is an embroidery of honeysuckles which my mother has wrought. It is such as you liked once and was lost." He held it out over his arm. A glance told her that it was just such as she had lost that night on the quay. Then she looked into his eyes and could find nothing in their darkness.

"What is the price, boy?" she said carelessly.

"It is not at a price. I pray you of your kindness take it for what was lost."

She waited a moment, still searching his mind, but whatever he thought was not to be read in that heavy, calm face. "Sirrah, you are insolent. I am no waiting-woman to take a pedlar's gift." She turned away and Hugh put up his embroidery and strode on.

Lady Du Pré received him without a word, watched him while he set down his pack and opened it; but he took out only a book, curiously bound in golden velvet embroidered with blue and silver and fastened with a silver clasp. "Lady, here is a rare, noble book. I think there is not such another in the world. See, this is my mother's own work and the fashion of it came to her, as she told me, while she knelt before the altar of Our Lady in Holy Rood; and indeed she has wrought nothing more gracious. The book within, it is a story of a noble knight and how he was outcast for serving Our Lady and fought for her against the Emperor and the Soldan of the Moors and died maintaining her honour against Mahound and the Prince of the Air: which is all writ by a learned friar of Hampton who hath made such fair, rich pictures, the like was never seen. For he is a noble scrivener and cunning in all the arts and very wise. Friar Nicholas is his name. Look, is it not right royal and gently done?"

My lady turned the pages, which were indeed finely written and bore beside the text pictures in bright and lovely colour. The friar in his sober hours had the eye and hand of an artist. Her cold face flushed as she looked. "This is beautiful," she said quietly. "This is not for me."

"I pray you. We thought of you, as we planned it, lady."

She looked up at him. "You are kind, Hugh Camoys. What is it worth to you?"

"I thought to ask twenty marks," said Hugh anxiously.

"Twenty marks!" Her eyes opened wider. "Why, child, that is not the worth of it."

"Oh, I promise you," he laughed. "Do not you fear that, lady. I am a merchant."

"And sell such goods as this," her hands caressed the book, "at such a price! This is a lord's gift, Master Hugh."

"No, by my faith. I pray you take it, lady. We wrought it for you."

Christine's curiosity, having drawn her nearer and nearer, now drove her between them. "What has the fellow

brought, mother?" She bent over to see, a thin, lithe thing.

"Only this"—my lady showed it but would not give it up—"this brodered book."

"By your leave, no," said Hugh quickly. "There is something else, my lady."

Christine flushed defiance at him. "I warrant you, some of the old stuffs my lady would not buy before."

But he had the impudence to ignore Christine. He knelt with his hands in his pack, he watched my lady.

"Go bring me my purse, Christine," said she, and took a key from the pouch at her girdle, and Christine departed in long strides of wrath.

Hugh's hands came out of his pack empty.

"So." My lady drew in her breath. "What is your errand?"

"To serve you, by my faith. This friar who writ the book for me, he is an old, wise man. He has seen much in his days and laid it all up in his mind. I have heard of him that when it was known the King had lost all and your lord was gone, he sent a letter to the castle in which was counsel that you should go with my Lady Christine to sanctuary. But perhaps it never came to your hand."

"I read it. I did not know that I had a friar for my friend," she said coldly. "You may see that I am not weak as he thought me, who live safe in my own house."

"God send your ladyship good days! I pray you, give me leave to speak."

"You are bold enough, sirrah," she frowned. "So my lord found you."

"God rest him. Do me right, lady. If I crossed his purpose, I would have kept him safe."

"You, sirrah!" she laughed contempt.

"I am a poor merchant and a great lord was he. But poor folk are quick to know where danger is. Do you hear what men say now in Hampton, lady? It is that the lands of Du Pré grow ripe for plucking."

She frowned. "What knave's talk is this?"

"I am no knave to you nor have been. I take you to witness, lady, I gain nothing here nor shall gain unless I can serve you."

After a moment of silence: "It is true," she said slowly. "But you are too cunning, Master Hugh. You go about and about."

Hugh smiled. "Good faith, I go as you will let me, my lady. Thus it is then. The friar said to me, 'Look, this lady trusts the world over much. Her lord is gone and her friends are down and scattered and there is her daughter with a rich inheritance. Who shall guard her? If a knight would snatch at the maid and her lands, who shall stay him? Let him make himself friends in high places and he hath her at his desire. Whose ward is she? Nay, none but God's,' so said the friar. 'In God's house should she be. It is an evil world. I wish we may hear of no strong rogue at Marwell. The fiend is with power.' So he said."

"What man do you fear?"

"I, my lady? I fear all men unless I have proved them."

"Speak your mind in God's name," she cried.

"Why, this is in my mind. With the white nuns at Romsey you are safe and she, whatever comes and whoever hath power."

"Whoever?" she repeated. "My Lord Warwick is master in Hampton, and he stands my friend."

Hugh was silent a full minute before he answered, "Then must he wish you safe." Again he waited. "All is said, lady."

"All?" she cried. "Enough, by my faith!"

He bowed awkwardly and turned away up the hill for his horse.

Christine had been in no hurry to bring him his money. He found her playing hide-and-seek with her dog among the yews that marked an ancient track. The dog again attacked him and she laughed. "Fie, Master Camoys, fie! A lion makes war on none but rogues. Kill him then, lion, kill him."

The small dog worried Hugh's foot. "Let me live, lady," said the victim meekly.

"Why?"

"To behold your virtue: and repent of my sins."

"Oh, rogue, you do not know what they are."

"It is not for want of telling, Lady Christine. But now I think of it, I do not."

"What is that now?" she frowned. "You are so sly and smooth I cannot tell half your impudence. Sirrah, you have called me a liar."

"No, faith. When you tell me my sins, you believe every word. But the truth is I am not so, I am a plain, simple fellow, who is faithful in his fashion."

"God have mercy," she cried. "Let us weep together. You have had cruel wrong, Master Camoys."

Hugh smiled. "So it is, Lady Christine. I am always in the wrong when I am with you."

"Why, then, one of us must be in fault. Holy Virgin, boy, it cannot be me!"

"You! No, faith, you are the Lady Christine Du Pré and I am a pedlar. Which of us could forget that?"

"What would you have, sirrah?" She flung back a rope of hair. "Well, did my mother buy more of your broderies?"

"No, my lady, I had no fortune," said Hugh sadly. "Give me leave, I go to fetch my horse."

"You may wait upon me. I was sent to fetch money for you. Tell me, sir, why was I sent away?" Hugh stared. "Oh, you must be private with my mother, God save your worship."

Hugh laughed. "Yes, faith, I have many secrets with my Lady Du Pré. As is but fitting."

"Go your way," she said. But when he had gone called him back. "Hugh! Did you sell the honeysuckle embroidery?"

"I thank you, my lady," he took off his cap and turned away.

"Ah, wait. I ask pardon, Hugh. I ask you to give it me."

He looked at her in doubt, he opened his pack and took it out. "May it please you," he said formally.

"You are kind."

"God save you," he said and strode off.

When he came back on his horse, my lady still sat in the hollow of the hill and Christine was at her side, but they were not looking for him. There was another horseman climbing the hill and the sun shone upon him and made him all red and gold.

He gave his horse the spur and came thundering on, reined up and sprang from the saddle at their feet. "My lady, I kiss your hands. Lady Christine, fair flowers grow on this hill." The small dog assailed him fiercely. "Mercy, good Lion, mercy!"

"You find us well guarded, sir," said my lady.

"Ay, faith, none but a heart of steel would venture." He came to Christine's side. "Save me of your grace, lady fair, and I will be your prisoner, rescue or no rescue."

"Are you worth a ransom?" she laughed.

"Give me my purse, child," her mother said.

"By mine honour, I would not rob her, my lady," he cried. "I am her true man."

"Sir, you are merry. I have a debt to pay. It must not wait even for my Lord Warwick's squire." She looked steadily at Hugh. "Master Camoys——"

"Why, old Hugh!" said Osbern. "Are you here, my merchant? How does the good trade?"

"I thank you. It is twenty marks, my lady," said Hugh meekly.

She counted it into his hand and with two bows to each and all he mounted and rode away.

"There goes the best needlewoman in Hampton," Osbern laughed.

My lady rose. "Sir, will you come to the house? You are welcome," she said coldly. "Give me your arm, child."

Osbern found them both in a solemn humour.

CHAPTER XIII

BREAD UPON THE WATERS

THAT was the last time for many a day that Hugh rode out with embroideries. He did not despise the modest gain; he never let any sound trade that he had built up pass out of his hands; the embroideries still went to market town and manor, but he had a journeyman for that and himself abode in Hampton, he was so great a man. It frightened him a little to find how trade made trade for him and money money. Men discovered that it was good to deal with Hugh Camoys. He held to a bargain, he paid to the hour. Other merchants might do so, but he was always ready to trade, he would venture for merchandise which had no market; he could contrive to supply what no warehouse had in store; he could find a way to meet the need of a man hard pressed. He was dealing in all manner of goods, not only the mercer's stuffs for his mother and her needlewomen, not only the old crop of wool and the new, but shipwrights' stores for the ships that De Roffa was building, and Cornish tin and grain. He had his own ventures in shipping to send wool overseas to Flanders. He was deep in alliance with the house of Overey, using their solid strength as his own, and through them linked with other of the rich merchant families.

The little house under the eastern wall was unfit for a man of such dignity. Eleanor Camoys left it in tears and pride to go into a house of three stories, a timbered, gabled house in French Street, where there was a shop for her working-women and a chamber behind it fit for a merchant's business.

More work came upon him when Jan Hooydonk brought over Flemish ships, hurrying to the news of wool for sale, which had reached Flanders with the first shipments from Hampton. Hooydonk did not pretend to be pleased that Hugh had sent his wool across in Hampton ships. "You bin up before dawn. You bin milk my cows, Hugh Camoys. Yea, I will not forget that to you," he chuckled. "Now what you got for me?" He was something appeased with an offer of full cargoes of the old crop and a promise of his share of the new if he made a quick passage from Flanders. "So. If I bin back here to bid against the cursed Venetian galleys I will get what I will pay for. I thank you. Yea." And he laughed and haggled prices. "You bin a great rogue. But I take it." He held out his hand. "So. You ship also some more in your Hampton ships? I know, God in heaven, I get into Bruges before that topheavy carrack of yours, I know her. Yea. I will see she gets no good market in Bruges. You had ought to ship on Flemish ships, Hugh Camoys."

"Why, so I do, captain. You sail full and you make two voyages this summer. And I give you a fair price. Do me right."

"You bin a good merchant. Yea. We want the wool. You might have driven me harder, I tell you now," he chuckled. "Our looms bin hungry. But you trade fair. I also. I got something for you. That cargo in the Beaulieu River, you remember? You have asked me to bring two weavers. I bring them. Good youngers. I pick them for you. There was many would come. The weaver folk bin live hard this winter. I pick the best. See, he is your friend, Jan Hooydonk."

And Hugh thanked him with a dinner, and since wine was priceless in Hampton, much white ale.

Thus began a new venture that set the town talking. It was the order of nature that Hampton merchants should sell wool to foreign lands and from the foreigner buy cloth. That Hampton might weave its own wool had occurred to no man. Hugh Camoys, who had less respect for the

established order than most men and more of the desire to make things work together easily and fruitfully, would never have thought of such a strange, bold plan but for the ban on the wool trade. Laden with the task of arranging it, he began to think it had been a boy's fancy, a wild plan made at hazard, so many difficulties he found; so it was scorned. Nobody in Hampton knew anything of weaving; mercers and tailors scoffed at the notion of weaving in Hampton. Even in the friendly house of Overey there was contempt. Tom Overey, a slow fellow indeed but the shrewdest judge of cloth in the town, and pledged deep in Hugh's ventures, would have none of this, and asked him, with Kate gurgling at his elbow, if he would bring in worms to make silk. Even his mother could not (though he felt her trying and for once was angry with her) pretend to believe that her wonderful boy would succeed in this. It seemed to her working against God's providence, which had ordained that no fine cloth should be woven in England, and to weave bad cloth was plain sin. Only Dame Overey bade him go on, and but for her strengthening of his hands he might have sent his weavers back to Flanders.

They gave him measureless trouble. They had no English and he "a poor pennyworth" of Flemish, and that mercantile and nautical, not textile. They had brought the parts of a loom with them, but to set it up asked joiners' work and the joiners could not understand them nor they the joiners. When the loom was ready, they would not use the yarn that Dame Overey found for them and there was maddening work to discover what they wanted and how it must be spun, and expound to spinster women who had no notion of doing anything but in their own old way. And each new difficulty was a roaring jest to Hampton.

Yet this won Hugh better liking. He bore to be laughed at with a cool temper, and his townsmen were well pleased to find that the shrewd fellow who throve so wondrous fast, in whose hands everything turned to gold, had his follies and might be made a butt.

Somehow and at last, as hard as he drove, it seemed to

Hugh the labour of years and all his other business mere leisure, the weavers were got to work, and there was a bolt of cloth in their shed in which Tom Overey, grunting and frowning, could find no flaw, when the Venetian fleet came up Hampton water.

The galleys anchored at sunset. In the morning Contarini came ashore. He paid his dues, he saluted the new mayor, he made a survey of quay and town, and by noon he stood at the door of the new counting-house, like a sorrowful saint come to a mean and sordid place with a call to repentance.

Hugh started up from his books. "Signor admiral! This is kind. A fair welcome!"

"So you are not yet hanged?" said Contarini.

"Never less. Or so I think."

"This is a loose, lawless land." Contarini sat carefully on a stool and sighed. "Here is a new mayor and a new constable and God knows who is King. But all men speak well of you and with a smile. Tell me, child, what are you now? It is not possible men should love you."

"I have thriven some little."

"The devil doubt you. Does that win love in England?"

"By my faith, I have found it so."

"A mean land, a mean, slavish land. Well, and in this palace of yours"—he looked round the plain, low room—"what is done?"

"All things are bought and sold. What is your will?"

"A prince merchant!" Contarini smiled. "May it please your highness, spare me a trifle of wool for my poor fleet?"

"Sir, the abbey shearing comes to my hand presently. I have word of Cotswold wool upon the road. Shall we make a price?"

"Spoke like my master!" Contarini smiled. "By St. Mark, I must be humble, I see that all lies in your hand."

"Why, sir, it is true some good men are pleased to trust me with their business. And so sadly have we Hampton merchants fared that we must needs stand together now."

"And make a band to hold up the price? I thank you for the warning. But I think some of you have last year's clip yet in store. That will not make for high prices, my lord."

"Sir, by God's grace, we have found a market in Flanders, and the old wool is gone or on the seas already."

"Say you so?" There was a queer humour in his eyes which Hugh did not relish. "In Flemish ships, I warrant you."

"The Flemish fleet has come and gone and is to come again. But we have ships of our own in the trade, too, sir."

"I know your Hampton rig," said Contarini with contempt. "Well, my master, it seems you are in a case to be hard upon me."

"God forbid! That makes no trade, which cannot thrive without friendship. Sir, I would have you satisfied, I promise you. Let us talk of it. There is fair profit for us and for you."

"I thank you for fair words. We will talk of it again. But I had forgotten, you are so swift. I have something for you which you asked of me, my friend. There is wine aboard for your highness, wine of Spain, wine of Sicily, wine of Cyprus. Since you did not tell me of your taste, I have brought all three, and indeed each hath its excellence."

"Good thanks, signor. I will take all at a fair price."

Contarini frowned, made a gesture of disgust. "A fair price!" he sneered. "Be it so. My clerks shall account with you, merchant. You might have had it for a gift."

"I pray you, do not take me ill. I asked for it in trade."

"You have done after your kind," said Contarini. He rose to go and turned. "I had forgot. Tell me, how long have these pirates been watching your haven?"

"Pirates? I know of none," Hugh smiled. "I think this is said to try me, signor."

"Good sir, I have no need. You do not puzzle me. Fare you well."

Hugh started up. "I pray you, let me hear more of this. By my faith, I have heard of no pirates till now."

"This is a lawless, feeble land," said Contarini. "You Hampton merchants are well advised. Good watch and guard you keep on your haven."

"Why, sir, I hope you have had no hurt?"

Contarini laughed. "Hawks do not strike at the eagle. I thank you, the galleys of the Republic are safe on any sea."

"All the world knows that. But our little Hampton ships, too, sail free and come safe to haven."

"Do you say so? There is a fleet of French pirates out in the Channel and I saw among them a ship of your Hampton rig, a high carrack, *Michael* was the name upon her. Good sir, it is well and kindly done to send out your wool in your own ships. The French mariners will thrive by it and you shall earn their blessing."

"Sir, stand my friend. This is no jest to us poor Hampton folk who have but few ships can take the sea. Where was this carrack that you saw?"

"Out to the west off the Wight, in a covey of French craft, which waited, as I guess, to catch the hoys coming up from Cornwall. I pray your worship had no venture in her."

"Why, sir, what hurts one of us in Hampton hurts all, so close are we knit."

"Good Christian town!" Contarini laughed.

"But this carrack, the *Michael*, sir, it was upon the Flanders voyage, it should not have been west of the Wight."

"God save your innocence! Good friend, if a haven hath two entries and you find a fleet of pirates watching one, you must not hope they have forgot the other."

"Sir, of your grace—this is true and not told to mock me?"

"Now by St. Mark you"—Contarini began fiercely and broke off—"you should not meddle with the sea, child. It will break your simple heart. Play your little

tricks on land and gain your pennies safely. Now look you, if ever your carrack comes safe home, then call me liar. And for the rest, lay it up in your mind that the French have beset Hampton water, and no ship of yours goes in nor out."

"And we must sell our wool to foreign mariners."

"Why, child, if you English cannot keep the seas you must even use the men that can. Fare you well."

Hugh was left in doubt and fear, telling himself, as the Italian designed, that the tale was invented to keep down the price of wool, while his sombre mind insisted upon torturing him, which also was within the Italian's purpose, by the expectation that the worst was true. The *Michael*, though Hooydonk had succeeded in his threat and kept her waiting for a market at Bruges, should have been in Hampton water long since, and he was apprehensive before Contarini spoke. He reckoned her cargo of wool not less than two thousand marks, she would come back with that in gold and goods, Flemish cloth, Flemish arms, whereof a shrewd man could make more. But two thousand marks dead loss, and upon that the value of the ship! Enough to break a man's heart. There were others had a share in the venture (he took no hazard all to himself), but he would lose much and it was the first time. He felt that his God had turned against him.

All that day and into the night he was busy among merchants and mariners seeking any news that would comfort him and found none. It was growing into a common opinion that the *Michael* was lost, and he heard rumours of French pirates bold in the Channel, and it was certain that none but small coasting craft had come into Hampton under the English flag for days past, but he could not find any man to bear out Contarini's tale. The morning brought confirmation. A balinger of St. Ives, the *Kateryn*, came to the west quay with rent canvas and cross-bow bolts sticking out of her hull like skewers, and her captain told how he and a dozen other Cornishmen were making along the coast at sunset when a fleet of French

pirates swooped on them from under the Wight, and he only escaped, standing into shoal water till nightfall.

Then there was rage and tumult in Hampton. Not only those who had ventures in peril at sea, merchants anxious for ship and cargo, wives for their men, felt the blow. It was bred in Hampton folk that seafaring was the life of the town. Though their trade overseas had fallen feeble, and their ships were laid up and still they had found livelihood, yet their faith was set on the sea. That pirates should beset the port the moment their shipping began to thrive again roused fierce passion. They had their pride, too, and their fears. Hate of the French was inveterate. They talked again of the French armada that burnt the town. They swore that the golden age of Hampton was when Englishmen held all the French ports and English armies marched through France. Now the wheel had gone round. What if a French armada came to Hampton quays again? That French pirates should sweep the seas to the entry of the haven was near enough—something too near—not to be borne.

The mayor held council with aldermen and merchants, while a noisy crowd filled the street below. The mayor led his council to the castle to ask help of my Lord Warwick and found him angrier than council or crowd.

My Lord Warwick was inspired to believe this piracy a blow against his private honour, a villainous design to bring him into contempt. This had not occurred to the mayor or his merchants, who were yet well content that he should think so, if it would make him active to help them. He was very ready. He was Captain of Calais, as he reminded them; it was his peculiar duty to guard the Channel seas, and that the French should blockade Hampton upon his coming to Hampton Castle was a challenge most insolent. He would spend every ship and man of his to make them smart for it.

"Piracy is a game that two can play," said De Roffa at his elbow. "Be patient, my masters, I think you will not leave off losers."

Warwick laughed. "This old hound, he smells plunder. By mine honour, you shall bring many a French prize into Hampton for this."

But the mayor and the merchants looked at each other. It was very well, the mayor made bold to tell him, it was not their present need, which was to drive off the pirates so that Hampton ships might come safe home.

Warwick and De Roffa, not being merchants, thought this dull and cowardly and instructed them. The right manly remedy for piracy was more piracy, not defence and protection. How many ships could they fit out with fighting crews and arms?

Again merchants and mayor were troubled. From the midst of them arose the meek voice of Hugh Camoys. "If it please your lordship send out ships of yours to harry these knaves, we might make prize of them and their prizes": whereat came a murmur of approval.

De Roffa's eyebrows went up. "Here is a great captain," said he. "What fleet have you to your hand that you make plans for my lord?"

"Sir, our best ships are at sea in peril or taken already," said Hugh. "What help is there for us that we may win them again?"

"Help me, for I will not help myself, quoth he," De Roffa grinned. "Is this your spokesman, Master Mayor?"

"I cry you mercy," said the mayor. "He spoke truth. He asked what we ask."

"Let be, Giles. They are within their right," said Warwick, and began to explain the great vengeance he intended. The King's ships in Hampton, as they well knew, were all unseaworthy by disuse and long neglect. It had been his first care to fit them out and build more, and before the winter he would have such a fleet in Hampton water that no pirate would dare show his masthead.

"Before the winter, my lord!" the mayor echoed.

Meanwhile—meanwhile, my lord had his own ships at Calais, in the Downs. Already—so careful was he of his good town's need—an express had gone into Kent to bid

them put to sea and spare no French sail. Trust them, they would make merry work in the Channel, and the merchants of France would presently curse the day that ever they sent out pirates to challenge Warwick's power.

"We humbly thank your lordship," said the mayor and led his rueful company out.

"Look how they go, like hens in the rain," De Roffa grinned; and the two great men fell to planning what French ports would give them richest plunder.

But the mayor and the merchants were not content to leave it so. Again they sat in council and bitterly they spoke their minds of my Lord Warwick till Hugh was weary and cried out: "I pray you, my masters, what is said in all these words? That the baron will do nothing for the merchant, so it is and hath ever been and we know it well. Why, then, let us do something for ourselves. I pray you, come to it." And this was well taken, for each one had his ventures at sea. But when they counted their resources, they must needs confess that though they could muster archers in plenty and mariners enough, of ships fit to take the sea there were left in Hampton but few and small. Yet they inclined to try fortune with what they had, to crowd men upon the little craft and put out against the pirates in hope to find the fleet scattered and snatch a ship here and there and so lessen the odds and drive off the rest. Of this hopeful plan the merchants who had seen fighting owned their doubts, but vowed they should go into it heartily. So they went their ways to make ready ships and mariners and archers and pikemen and the town was joyfully busy.

Hugh had no ship of his own, it was not his part to call out men and number them, he gave his credit for furnishing arms and stores and wandered idle and thoughtful on the bustling quay, and in his idleness the enterprise seemed to him desperate. That he lacked the knowledge to judge of it, he was well aware, but he was not apt to be hopeful of what he knew nothing. He took boat and rowed himself out to the Venetian galleys where they lay in the stream.

On the admiral's ship, on the high poop, Contarini paced slow, stately, alone, and the setting sun made his hair an aureole. Hugh came alongside and was challenged, made to wait, brought to the presence.

"What do you lack, merchant?"

"Signor admiral, you have often given me of your wisdom. I am come to seek it now."

"This is new," Contarini smiled. "Never yet have I said what you would heed. I will be sworn you never asked any man for his counsel yet, meaning it honestly."

"Once. Once I asked a holy friar if I should take the vows. And he said me nay."

"He was right. You are neither good enough nor bad enough to be a monk. Nor——"

"It was my own thought, sir."

"Nor anything else that hath zest. You are of the herd. What would you?"

"Sir, you brought us news of pirates and it is cruel truth for us. So must we venture out against them with our poor strength. I——"

"By the saintly lion, here is blood!" Contarini cried. "Here is a great resolve!"

"I pray you give me your wisdom upon it what hope have we."

Then Contarini asked him how many ships they had in Hampton and what fighting men, and was told five ships or it might be four that could sail and four hundred men besides mariners, but the ships were only hoys and the like small craft.

Contarini turned to face the sunset and smiled sadly as a saint might smile for pity. "And you bid me tell your fortune!" he said. "Child, all is lost before you venture."

"Do not say so! Look, sir, our ships are few and small, but each will carry a great company, and our plan is to mark down a pirate ship and run aboard and master her before the fleet come to her help and so (with God's help) another till we have as many ships as they and can chase them back to France."

"By the cockerel of St. Peter, here is a plan indeed!"

"How do you say of it?"

Contarini laughed. "It is nothing. It is folly. It is giving men to death."

"This I feared. Fare you well, sir."

"What, are you done?" Contarini cried. "Wait awhile. Tell me whose plan is this? I stake my soul it is not yours."

"You have lost."

Contarini laid hold of him, felt him as though he were not sure he was solid flesh. "It is an answer, by St. Mark," he said softly.

"If it is true, it is an answer. You—you plan to send out cock-boats against a fleet of French carvels! Come, then, whose ruin do you seek?"

"You do me wrong. All stand or fall together in this. So it has come upon our town we must fight or pine away. Sir, we choose to fight."

"That is well crowed. Thereafter—Master Camoys, he sends out his cock-boats and goes to prayers."

"I go aboard and make my venture with the rest."

"Why, child," Contarini laughed, "what should you do in a sea-fight? You are no mariner, God help you, and I will be sworn you are nothing with bow and spear."

"It is true, I must do as I can. But how shall a merchant bid men fight for him who will not fight for himself? All stand together at the last. I go with the rest, sir. Fare you well."

"And so you shall. You have won," Contarini cried. "Kiss me, child. So." Hugh was held a moment in lean strong hands. "When is your great fleet to sail? With the dawn?" He turned and stood gazing at the horizon and the sky. "It is well. This calm holds. Now, child, hear the wisdom of the old man of the sea." He took Hugh's arm and walked to and fro. "The dawn wind will be light and southerly. The Frenchmen will be lying off the land and your hoys must beat to windward to come

at them. You can make nothing of it. But here are six good galleys which need no wind. Now, give me a company of your longbowmen for each galley of mine and I will deliver the pirates into your hand."

"Sir, this is noble, this is to deal with us like a king."

"Ill-said, child," Contarini smiled. "We honour no kings in Venice. But, indeed, I think it is not like a merchant."

"Sir, we will show you that merchants can be grateful."

"Ay, now talk of the prices you will make me," Contarini laughed. "By St. Mark, I will hang you."

"I know well there is no price for this."

"Away with you, go to your mayor and if he ask why the Admiral of Venice serves Hampton say that he does it for love of you." Contarini watched him row away over the darkening water where nothing moved but his boat and he, and his rowing was fierce. "A rogue," Contarini murmured, "a rogue. I cannot tell what is in him that takes my heart. He hath worked some sorcery upon me. My flesh yearns to him. But I would I could think he had not devised that I should come to his aid. A merchant knave he is."

Then he made signal for his captains to come aboard and when they were assembled in his cabin told them what work he had for the fleet. They heard him eagerly and made merry over the battle to come. Not a man of them wondered that they should go out to fight for Hampton or suspected the admiral of any private affection. It was within their orders to defend the sea against pirates; it was the policy of Venice to give help at need to a port which served her. Hampton was the port for all their English trade, the base of the fleet which came every year to deal with all the north, Flanders and the Hansa towns. It would ill serve Venice for Hampton water to be blocked by pirates and Hampton Town ruined. The admiral had a keen eye for his duty, a quick bold man, the Contarini!

So they thought of the matter, and Contarini at the head of the table, letting his mind cherish a great lumbering

fellow with shadowed eyes, feared that the rogue thought of it just so and was gently sad.

The galleys weighed and drew alongside the town quay in the last of the twilight. As soon after midnight as the ebb was running the little Hampton ships began to work down the river. Before the dawn the galleys took aboard each her company of archers and cast off and followed with oars out. By the time they rounded Calshot, they had caught up the four hoys. Then the light wind was abeam, the oars were shipped, and the slaves had their fill of black bread and onions and each a measure of wine to hearten him, while the galleys stood on under easy sail. Even so they gained. Light came over the sky and the water grew grey and the wooded shores opened before them, and when they saw the white cliffs on the west of the island the hoys were far astern.

Standing by Contarini on the poop Hugh peered after them anxiously. "Good faith, sir, I will answer for them they are doing their best."

"Who?" Contarini was looking ahead. "Oh, your cock-boats." He laughed. "Never fear, they will be up when the wolves are in the net. Good merchants are they."

"There is not a man who is not lusting to fight."

"Such a breed of men never I knew," Contarini laughed. "No, not even of the heathen. You drink blood in Hampton." But when Hugh was beginning to answer: "Peace, child, peace. Your men will fight like other men, I doubt you not, dying no more often than they must. Look. There are our pirates." He pointed, and in the growing light Hugh made out a cluster of ships lying off the island. They showed little sail, they were still or almost still.

Contarini shouted in Italian to his next astern and altered course. They were sailing in line ahead; the oars went out and the sails were furled and they steered out as though they were making for deep water, passing close by the pirates. But when they were well to windward

Contarini shouted again, and the order passed from ship to ship, and all together they went about and came back upon the pirate fleet in line abeam. "Now, child," Contarini said, "go to your archers. I will pick you a ship. Spare your shafts. Wait till you come in bowshot. Then each man mark his man. Let nothing live on deck."

Each galley did likewise, each chose a ship, and when the longbows could reach her the rowing stopped, and the galley was held in the wind while the archers shot down every man who showed himself until, with none to steer or turn the sails, the stricken ships began to drift away down-wind.

In the rest of the pirate fleet, when they had struggled out of the bewilderment of surprise, the trumpets pealed, and decks and rigging were dark with men, and each ship that was nearest let off a storm of cross-bow bolts and all laboured to beat up against the wind and come upon the galleys together. But into the wind they could not sail, and the galleys, holding off under oars, easily kept to windward and still gave the Hampton longbows good shooting, and others of the pirates' ships were crippled and fell out of the fight. By that time those first attacked had drifted down upon the hoys, which found them a helpless prey and manned them and brought them on to join the battle. Then such of the pirates' fleet as still had men enough to work the ship tried to break away to the west and escape. But the galleys were swifter and handier and so harassed them with archery and the threat to ram that one crashed into another and both were lost, and a third having lost helmsman after helmsman came blundering upon a galley and the Hampton archers boarded her. Meanwhile the hoys and the ships they had taken and manned dealt with the rest of the fleet, save one that drifted ashore on the Wight and there lay helpless.

Where Hugh stood silent among merry archers gazing at the captured ships a boy came to him and plucked his sleeve and said "The admiral, the admiral."

Contarini met him as he climbed the poop. "Is it well done, child?"

"Good faith, sir, you are a great captain. This is the most wondrous fight——"

"That ever I saw, saith the babe at the breast. Fie, this is no fight but an exercise. Look, there is your great carrack, your *Michael*." He laughed. "Oh, Master Hugh, pray God they have not pillaged her! What if her goods and her gold be gone to France?"

"I shall know soon enough. There are others who have had worse fortune. One that was sunk was the mayor's ship."

Contarini laughed. "Ay, there is sweet solace in another man's loss."

"I do not find it." Hugh looked at him heavily. "Sir, these rogues have taken more of our ships than I guessed. A half of this fleet of theirs was Hampton craft and from the west. Who knows how many more they have sent into French harbours? I thank God that you came to our help."

"You would," Contarini sighed. "It is your nature."

"But I pray you stand by us yet. Look, sir, this is not the end of our danger. There must be others of these pirates away to the east. Else they had not taken the *Michael*."

"Doubt it not, child. They watch both holes to your burrow."

"Why then, of your grace, let us sail against them."

"It is a man, child," Contarini gazed at him smilingly. "It is in its heart a man, child. Well said. We will make an end, Hugh. By the saintly lion, I am not wont to botch my work. But softly. We must have some order in this great fleet of yours."

Then boats were put out and rowed from one captured ship to another and made sure that those which were seaworthy and in good trim had crews and fighting-men enough, and put wounded and prisoners in those that must work back to Hampton, and divided arms and arrows fairly and so made ready a good fighting-fleet.

As the day waned the sailing-ships began to beat south-

ward round the island and the galleys followed in the evening. The light wind grew stronger at sunset and veered into the west and they hugged the shore, and so in the dark came close by the great white cliffs and at dawn found the pirates lying under the lee of the island. Then the galleys steered between them and the shore on a course for Hampton, but the pirates seeing the first of the sailing-ships, stood out to make prize of her. The galleys turned into line and followed, and again chose each a ship for their archers and the second fight went as the first had gone, but more fiercely and swiftly. For though this was the stronger of the pirate fleets, no prizes with prize crews among it, but each ship French, the Hampton men came on boldly and would not wait for the archers on the galleys to do their work but laid their ships alongside ships unscathed and boarded and took them by hard fighting. Before noon every one of the pirate craft was in their hands.

"Sir, do we please you now?" Hugh cried. "I think we have fought in this fight."

"Ay, fiercely, with your heads down. Which is a way for beasts not men. And your brows are bloody, and blind you die. Nay, child, this was no fight but a blundering brawl."

"By my faith, you are hard to please."

"That am I," said Contarini. "I am an artist."

But the Hampton men, though friends and kin lay dead, were joyous and shouting ballads, and making their trumpets blare they sailed home.

The galleys drew ahead and away and in them there was no music but the droning of the slaves at their oars till Contarini called up a boy with his lute and made him sing a girl's love-song.

CHAPTER XIV

THE TOWN AND THE CASTLE

EVERY bell in Hampton rang that night. Every church sang its Te Deum on the morrow. It was hard upon fifty years since the town had been so happy. A great part of the joy came from pride that Hampton men had proved themselves again the masters of the French. After a generation of defeats it was comfortable to be sure of that. Whence came hope that the long years of dwindling trade were ended, too, and they would be rich again in a new age of victory. And to be sure, they were rich by this one fight—richer at least—much loss was won back and if some good craft and their men had been taken into French ports, there was balance of clear gain in many a stout French ship.

The new mayor and the men who were his familiars kept their heads and were wise enough to be generous. For Master Hugh Camoys, who had been most singular modest when they were all praising him for the grand device of bringing the Venetians into the fight, when they came to talk of the prizes, made bold (he said) to speak first as one whose heavy loss had been recovered, must needs declare he would not gain by others' ill-fortune. It was his mind the town should take all the gain of the fight and hold fair account with wives who had been widowed and merchants who had lost ship or goods. For it was by the town that the victory had been won and none should have private profit of other men's blood, but each share according to his losses and his degree. And this, whoever had come into council with a different mind, none cared

to dispute. For it chimed with the happy mood of the time and Hugh Camoys had proved himself beyond sneers and jealousy a man to follow.

The common folk of Hampton when they came to hear of it were lifted to a higher power of rejoicing. Such a way of ruling the town had not been known within any man's memory. It was the plain duty of common folk to fight for the common weal on land or sea, but that plunder and prizes should go into the common store was a new, strange thing. The town forgot its poverty and its factions, and was assured that all things worked together for good.

But in the castle they had their doubts of that. Warwick and De Roffa told each other with bitter candour that they were made to look like men of straw. There was no one, as De Roffa took pains in telling Warwick, of whom they could complain. The mayor had been most correctly loyal in asking Warwick's help. When that was denied, it was his bare duty to call on the town to help itself, in persuading the Venetians to fight with him he had pleased every merchant and mariner in England, who asked of all things to stand friends with Venice; by his signal victory he had made Hampton men the heroes of the whole country. It was the devil's luck, indeed, that they had won their fight, without any help from my Lord Warwick: who would remember De Roffa had been earnest that he should not leave all his ships in Calais and the Cinque Ports but bring a squadron to Hampton. Warwick could remember that De Roffa had promised him a quiet fellow to manage the town who would take orders and do nothing himself. In the wisdom of De Roffa Hampton was to be a port where merchants and mariners would owe all to Warwick's bounty and favour: and behold it was venturous and masterful as London.

What they did agree upon, with ill grace, was that the townspeople had done marvellous well, would be mighty proud of it and need gentle handling. Each gentleman was in fact much startled by the prowess of the townsmen,

a horrible thing to men who were soldiers by birth and breeding, even more distressed that the townsmen could act in close hearty union. But since it was by the favour of towns Warwick and his party hoped to hold the country, they could not quarrel with Hampton.

So Warwick wrote a gracious letter to the mayor, and De Roffa went to give him joy, and the mayor and the Admiral of the Venetians were bidden to dinner at the castle. The mayor was all bland discretion. Contarini silent and melancholy in so grand a manner that when he was gone Warwick swore the rogue behaved like a king bidden to dine in a hovel. What Contarini said to his singing-boy as he supped on bread and olives and Cyprus wine was that they had given him the meat of dogs and the washing of the kennel to drink. The next day he sent to the castle a tun of wine of Sicily.

Warwick had skill in the arts of popularity and set himself to make favour in Hampton, going much about the town with Osbern Shirley who knew every man and was welcome everywhere for his good looks and had his master's genial ease. Whereat De Roffa sneered. "Will you tell me, my lord, who is to be the next mayor in Hampton? Some say it is you and some say young Osbern."

"I shall be mayor and he the constable, Giles," Warwick laughed.

And De Roffa withdrew into himself.

But some days after he came back to the castle and broke in on Warwick and Osbern sitting together with muster rolls before them, mighty grave and secret.

"You make yourself friends, my lord," he scowled.

"What now? Are you jealous again? I have no time for it. If you cannot be at hand when I need you there is room for another by my side."

"Oh, give you joy of him!" De Roffa laughed and flung himself into a chair. "I have nothing against your pretty squire. If you have a mind to a lapdog there is none better. You are not always so fortunate, my lord."

"Who is this malice for?"

"Do you remember the good Dame Du Pré? You gave her back her land free to win her. A pretty device. And grateful is she and trusts you. She is gone into the abbey at Romsey and taken her girl with her to be out of your hand."

Osbern tittered. "Oh fie, sir, fie! I doubt you were too bold with the girl."

"Down, sirrah!" De Roffa waved a hand at him. "Here is what comes of bounty to your enemies, my lord."

"So you thought the Du Pré heiress was meat for you," Warwick frowned. "You are not modest, my friend."

"Why, sir, you are something harsh with him," Osbern cried. "Look at him, I pray you, he is a wounded man. Here goes Sir Giles, lusty and gay, to woo the child, and behold her mother hath put her among the nuns. His heart bleeds passion."

"I am weary of this yapping," De Roffa said. "Can you think in the din, my lord? It is plain the woman means you ill. She has gone to sanctuary till she can find a way to pass over to your enemies. Let her match her girl to one of the Queen's minions and you have a strong enemy planted at the gates of Hampton."

Warwick lay back and stared at him and Osbern was solemn enough.

"You have a shrewd wit, Giles," Warwick said. "Come, what have you heard? Is there more than this?"

"No more. This I made sure of before I rode back. By the ragged staff, it is enough for me."

"You have not spoken with the women?"

"I?" De Roffa grinned. "What should I do in a pack of nuns?"

"There is no talk abroad of any of the Queen's men come south?"

"He would not shout his name. Wait awhile. We have not done with that Provençal yet. She has a devil in her bosom."

Warwick looked at Osbern. "Here is one who knows without hearing," he said and turned over his papers.

"You are right, Giles. The Queen is out and the north is up. Richard of York is slain——"

"Peace be with him," said De Roffa. "He was never a captain. So young Edward is master now:" and he grinned at Warwick. "That is a lad of other mettle."

"He has his neck to save. He will find who are his friends. We must march, Giles."

"At your pleasure."

"I dare not leave Hampton empty. If I spare you fifty archers can you answer for it?"

"The castle—against all hell. The town—they would fight against God and His angels if their trade was threatened. I can hold them to you unless all goes down. But by the ragged staff, I should serve you better riding between you and young Edward."

Warwick laughed. "You trust none, do you?"

"You know one I trust."

"Well, trust me to rule the boy. Go, pick your archers. I must march at dawn." And when De Roffa was gone: "There is a right trusty rogue, child," said he.

But Osbern looked at the table. "I cannot tell, my lord," he said primly.

"Why, what ails you?"

"I do not understand. This is new. You swore that whoever you left in Hampton you would take Sir Giles."

"Ay, before I knew he had his mind on this wench. Let be. He will keep faith. There will be no red roses come near Hampton while she is a maid. He is a dog that lets none other steal his meat."

"But if he gets her, my lord?"

"What!" Warwick clapped him on the shoulder and laughed loud. "You too, child? Nay, never fear, trust the good nuns and her mother. She will be a maid still when you come back with golden spurs."

CHAPTER XV

THE WORLD IS UPSIDE DOWN

THREE policies great and small troubled not the life of Hampton or any man in it.

Warwick marched away by the London road and was as if he had never been. After a while came news that the Queen had beaten him in a bloody battle and won London : then that he was not so much beaten nor London so much won : then that the Queen had run away from him into the north : and at last that Edward of York had defeated her utterly and slain a thousand (or a hundred) lords of hers and driven her into hiding and held King Henry her husband prisoner and would be King in his stead. And Hampton cared for none of these things. King Henry might be a saint, but in this world he was nought. King Edward might be no better, he would not be worse.

The new master in the castle was peaceable as the old. De Roffa held his little garrison in strait discipline. He had always horsemen out watching the roads, but they troubled no honest folk. He would take any stout, likely lad into his ranks, but he pressed none. He drew from the port dues the constable's right revenue, but asked no more and spent freely on the building of the King's ships, so that the town got back much of what it paid. Apart from his shipbuilding he did not meddle with work or trade. He paid due courtesies to mayor and aldermen, he would meet any man genially who came in his way, but he lived solitary. It was said that he had learning and kept a room full of books.

The trade of Hampton throve. Whatever the slaughter of barons and their retainers, it did no hurt to the flock-masters or the miners, it did not check the appetite of the south country for foreign cloth and silks and spices and wines. There might be a war of Kings and lords, but the mass of men kept the peace and tilled the land and had increase of their sheep and cattle and sought to live in richer ease. Neither King nor lord was strong enough to levy on trade nor hinder it. Since the great capture of the French pirates no more came out to prey upon the port of Hampton. The seas were safe as the roads. The Cornish hoys brought their tin freely, and freely the cargoes of wool and tin went out. For these the world was hungry as never before in any merchant's memory, so rich were other lands grown, and no port served the southern trade as well as Hampton, and great cargoes came back to her.

Every man was busy, every merchant had his ventures, and none busier nor more shrewdly venturous than Hugh Camoys. He rose far beyond broideries. The rounds of the markets and the countryside, the care of the shop was journeymen's work. It irked him that his mother would still prick out patterns and stitch among the hired women. Dame Camoys should take her ease like the mistress of a rich house. But since she could not be happy without her frame and her needle he was gentle to her and made believe she did it for pure love of silks and velvets and her craft, though he knew that what compelled her was the fear they might any hour be poor again. He was amused by her lack of faith in him. He seemed to himself by far the most able man he had known. Contarini told tales of a French merchant, Jacques Cœur, who reached out his hand across the world and subdued Christendom and heathenry to his purposes. Contarini himself had a way of seeming great, of living in his own heart a richer life than other men knew. But Hugh could deal with Contarini and make good profit of him, and the wonderful Jacques Cœur, he seemed to be a dreamer, his were fairy-tale ventures. Hugh Camoys built to endure. Born heir to nothing, he was, with a

man's life before him, as rich as any merchant in his town and none had more honour in it. No change of fortune could break him. He made sure of time to come. He had land as well as goods and ventures overseas. If the trade of Hampton fell dead, he could draw off to a pleasant manor under the hills and live at ease.

But he had no fear of any change. In peace or war, under any King or many, there was a place for him: the world would still want English wool and English tin and those things none could furnish better than Hampton and Hugh Camoys. He recognized with humble thanks that God's hand had led him to deal with Hooydonk and Contarini, with Cardonell and Beaulieu Abbey in the hour of their need. It was indeed his own wit in dealing with them which had made friends of them all. But he gave God the greater glory. Year by year afterwards the Venetian and the Fleming came first to him, the wool of Beaulieu was offered to him and Cardonell led the Cotswold flockmasters to his door. Such a hold upon the foreign fleets gave him a chance to furnish them with tin, and the Cornishmen, as hard as they drove their bargains, found him good to deal with. So the trade in his hands grew and when the fleets of Venice and Flanders were satisfied he could send out ships of his own to other lands.

What the Venetians and the Flemings brought was offered first to him. He only, in that first year of Warwick's power, he only had wine to sell, and wine was at a famine price in England since Gascony was lost. He was gentle with the vintners; there was always a profit for the man who dealt with Hugh Camoys; he was at pains to bring in, as the fleets came again, more southern wine and wine from Burgundy and the Rhine by way of Flanders. So once more Hampton became the English wine port and he was great with the vintners as with the flockmasters and mercers.

The mercers indeed long looked sourly at his wild venture of weaving. But when bolts of the cloth were on sale and no man could find they were worse than good Flemish

serge, as Flemish serge some was sold till it came into the wise head of Dame Overey to ask a higher price for it and suddenly men discovered that right Hampton serge was best of all and the weavers could not work fast enough. They taught their craft to Hampton lads, new sheds were built, new looms, and the weaving made rich gains.

Yet he kept the town's good will. It was common talk that he had no pride, wherein he was much misjudged, but his pride was not that which holds a man aloof, which requires pomp or demands reverence. He lived simply, he liked all manner of company, he would put a hand to any man's work, he would listen to every man's story. The poorer folk learnt to love him, not so much because his purse opened easily, as for his knowledge of them and his justice. He never forgot that he had been of the poorest and what it was like : he dealt with them as one of themselves, which was not the fashion of the merchant guild. In this he saw no virtue, his charity was virtue and laid up for him treasure in heaven ; but to make life easier for the journeyman and the porter and all the poor folk, that was merely the way to thrive in this world. He wanted good service of them, he wanted a town—as his ventures multiplied he came to believe that he had need of the whole town—full of brisk, bustling folk, and he held by the simple faith that the way for a man to gain was to give others a chance of gain. This it was that kept him in high favour with the merchants into whose preserves he thrust himself, who learned to say behind his back that Hugh Camoys never drove hard and wondered how so easy a man could thrive so mightily. He had discovered alone of them all that trading in gross and in many things needed no squeezed bargains to make great gains. In a town where one merchant dealt in wool, another in tin, another was a vintner, another a pepperer, he was all these and more : and in some way or other it seemed that each and every trade was the brisker for his dealings, so that men came to believe it was he who had made Hampton prosperous again. That new close friendship with the Venetians, the good will of

the Flemings, the restoration of the vintners, the bold ventures to strange ports overseas, work of Hugh Camoys was in all, if not all in all. The strongest men of the merchant guild were content to make alliance with him and follow where he led. But of all the town the mariners had most kindness for him. The sweeping of the French pirates from the seas made him their hero, it was he who by their reckoning had given them victory and vengeance after a generation of fear. And the victory bore fruit. He set the Hampton ships sailing again, he found good voyages for them, he cherished his crews nobly. The seamen of Hampton were ready to live and die for him.

So, happily for Hugh Camoys, busy years went by. King Edward made himself strong with Warwick by his side and there was peace in the land and De Roffa read his books in the castle and my Lady Du Pré abode with the nuns at Romsey and her daughter grew to womanhood. No man made a venture for the heiress. De Roffa's horsemen watched the roads too well for any roving knight to come near Romsey. The ladies never left the abbey demesne to give any man whom the King might choose to honour a chance of seizing them. De Roffa would ride to Romsey and pay the courtesy due from the constable of Hampton to the constable's widow and find a placid welcome. Less often Hugh came to the abbey with some rarity for a gift. It seemed to him that the mother and the daughter were well content to live among the nuns.

In Hampton the mothers of daughters began to say that Hugh Camoys was born to be a monk. Younger men had their batches of children. He was growing towards thirty and would not look at a woman as if he knew what she was for. Dame Overey, who felt herself the mother of his spirit and his deeds and could dream she was the mother of his flesh, found in this only to blame, but she shed tears over it. On the night when he came to her house and saw her daughter in a man's arms and gave Mistress Overey joy, she looked at him with some contempt: "Ay, ay,

the girl is honest goods," she said. "She will keep a man warm."

"And wear as well as her mother. Edward Burges will have good care of her. It is a sound, shrewd fellow."

"Good care, I thank you," Dame Overey laughed. "God have mercy on you, boy, do you think a woman needs care? He will take and use her. He knows what she is for."

"Faith, he could have no better fortune. And she is safe enough with him."

"Safe!" she echoed. "Oh ay, safe enough."

"You are not merry, my mistress. Good faith, it will be hard to lose her."

"Is it you should say so?" she cried fiercely. "Out on you, would you have the girl die a maid?"

Hugh stared at her and murmured, "Why no, God forbid."

"You know well who might have had her. If there had been a man's desire in you—ay, now say 'God forbid' again."

"Not I, faith. If it might have been, it had been well. But we were not made for that." He paused and looked at Dame Overey. "Neither she nor I, the more's the pity, mother."

"No mother of yours, mannikin. There is blood in them that I bear. You—when did your flesh crave company?"

"Why, every day and all day," he smiled. "But never a maid wants mine."

"Would you have a girl on her knees to you?" she said fiercely. "I vow you would run away. You are like an old monk that counts all women devils and shuns them."

Hugh came to her and put his arm round her. "Not I. I have a mother or two."

"She that bore you bore a fool, Hugh Carnoys—as wise as you are." But she let him hold her and cried a little.

Kate came in flushed and bright-eyed and he stood up and kissed her soundly. "Here is one more, Kate. Unto

her that hath shall be given. You will not lack. Joy go with you."

"I humbly thank your worship"—her eyes mocked him—"and ask your blessing."

"God have mercy upon Ned Burges."

"Fie, now here is malice! What have I done? Look how his eyes shine green on me. I vow the man is jealous."

"Now the man will say 'God forbid,'" her mother smiled.

"Amen," was what he said to that. "Yes, the man is jealous. Every man is jealous who sees you with Ned Burges."

"Sir, so I humbly hope," said Kate. "But they hide it too well. With a crackling of mirth."

"God bless you for a rogue."

"I have it at last." She clapped her hands. "His worship's kind blessing. It needed but that. Spoke like a grandfather. In faith he is a grandfather at heart, good Master Camoys."

"Why, child, say a godfather," Hugh smiled. "I pledge you to that in a year."

"Oh, sir, you shall be satisfied."

And he went away wondering if he had done wisely, sure that he had done honestly. Kate Overey woke more desire in him than any other woman he had known, he felt her a wholesome, hearty girl, he had respect for her mind, there could be no wiser match. She was not her mother, to be sure. If Dame Overey had been a maid! Well, Kate was Kate and it would have done excellent well. Even too well. Not a soul in the town but would have counted it another shrewd stroke of Hugh Camoys: who knew that in his heart he did not want to make himself one with her. A silly fellow. Something in him yearned after that slim proud child among the nuns. She had never stirred his blood like Kate Overey, he did not feel her a woman to desire, only he had need of her in his life. Whatever came to him, he would always be thinking of the Lady Christine. A silly fellow. It was very sure that she would

never think of him. A no-man's son, a merchant, a man who had chosen and would always choose to stay quiet in his town by his trade could not hope that Christine Du Pré would ever live by his side. She was for his masters—well, he counted no man his master—for some lord who had the King's favour—or if none pleased her, she would put on the veil. She was proud enough, thank God. She would own herself. Good faith, a silly fellow to dream of her! And he dreamed.

The years went by. Kate married her man and bore him one child and another and Ned Burges had more wine in his cellars than any vintner of Hampton, so much good trade came his way, and Hugh Camoys was closer than ever with the house of Overey. But men had learnt to say it was Tom Overey who was fortunate in that. All the daily order of his business in the town, his accountings and his stores were in the careful, patient hands of Tom Overey. Master Hugh Camoys had no time for these little things, he was grown so great with his ventures abroad to Cadiz and Venice, with his watch on the Flemish weaving towns, on the sheepwalks of Wiltshire and the Cotswolds and the Cornish mines.

De Roffa kept a cool civility with him, sending sometimes for his best broderies, whether out of a simple love for them or (as Hugh guessed) to remind him of what he had been, commanding, as became the constable dealing with a merchant, that he should be provided of any rare things in the Italian cargoes and paying nobly, but never seeking to use him or trust him as in his beginnings. He was the more surprised when the mayor fell ill to have a summons to the castle.

Under the rule of De Roffa it had no show of strength or pomp. The main gate stood open. The only guard to be seen was one man with no arms but a dagger at his belt. He pointed Hugh across the silent, empty courtyard to the keep where another stood who passed him on up the great stair and a page sprang up to open a door for him. He saw no other creature nor heard any more.

De Roffa met him with a smile and outstretched hand. "It is long since you have been in the castle, Master Camoys."

"Sir, I have not forgotten how first I came. Or who stood my friend."

"Fie, man, you have ever been your own best friend. I do not forget it either. The poor Du Pré—he would have made you his squire. God's pity, how he raged when you chose the merchant guild! And he is dead and you are grown rich and puissant."

Hugh laughed. "Puissant! You are merry. I keep my shop and my shop keeps me. Pray you, sir, what do you lack?"

"A pennyworth of worsted to darn my hose, so times go with me. Nay, you chose well, Hugh Camoys. It is a mean life to follow arms. Du Pré that scoffed at you, look, he lies dead—in a blind battle—for a lost cause."

"And Sir Giles de Roffa is constable in Hampton."

"And bids you welcome—to poor cheer. Come." They passed into another little room where a table was spread for dinner. Hugh did not show his surprise, though it was a strange thing that the lord of the castle should not dine at the high table in the hall, but De Roffa answered as if he had spoken, "Ay, you have seen more state here. I live like an anchorite. It is a poor knight hath Hampton now, my master. I have no more than the constable's dues, so my lord has dealt with me. I can keep no pack of footboys. We be all fighting men in the castle as few as we are. I dare not stint me of one archer, so the time goes."

A dread suspicion came upon Hugh that the man wanted money. But the dinner had no hint of an empty purse, it was rich beyond the plenty of a wealthy merchant's table and served on silver, and what De Roffa said next was to commend the spiced Cyprus wine. There was no more hint of poverty. He went off into something braggart, unlike him, about defending the honour of Hampton, which was his trust, to the last man and the last shaft.

"I pray God you will have no need," said Hugh most sincerely.

"Amen to that, saith my heart," De Roffa smiled. "He is young in arms who wants to smell blood again. But I have seen too much to count on this peace, Master Camoys. How long is it since English earth was red—five years, six years? It is long."

"Good St. Denis defend us!" Hugh cried. "Long? We have hardly learnt to work in peace."

"I warrant you there be some who reckon that Hampton has reaped good harvests."

"Sir, you speak darkly. What is it you bid me fear?"

De Roffa shrugged. "Fear nothing, but be ready for all things, my master. That is my own poor wisdom. Nay, I know nothing. But it is see-saw in this world"—he made a gesture—"see-saw. And this peace has lasted long. Well, let it be. Who has seen to-morrow?" He passed the wine. "Long life and good ventures, my friend. I thank you. As many years as I have spent, I hope for. Look you, what a vain thing it is to guess at life. Here is our good mayor lies sick unto death and I counted him as young a man as I am."

"Why no, not by ten years, sir. But true it is, I fear, he will not rise again, God befriend him. We had never one ruled the town better."

"Ay, he has done well. Where shall I find his fellow, Master Camoys?"

"Sir, there is none. Let us not speak of it, I pray you. He lives yet."

"Why, I must see my way. It is not fit the town should go masterless. To tell you my mind, friend, I count on Hugh Camoys. There is the best head in Hampton."

"Oh sir, not I. This is something too kind. Do not think of it. I am not Hampton born nor of Hampton blood. Men would not be guided by me."

De Roffa smiled. "Now by my life, of all men ever I knew you know best how to have your way."

"Good faith, sir, not I." Hugh was urgent to deny it.

"I do but fit myself to the way things go. I have no will. I promise you there is many a better man."

"Well, give me one."

"There is Thomas Overey, the mercer."

"He would take it?"

"And do wisely and honestly, I warrant him."

"And he is your familiar, oh my wise and honest friend. And you would be the man behind the curtain." De Roffa laughed. "Well, be it so." Hugh was again eager to convince him that he was in a mistake. Master Overey was a man of weight, the head of a great house, bound by blood to all the rich merchants - and so forth while De Roffa played with nutshells. "Peace, peace," he cried at last. "You know well that I know you. I am content to trust you."

After that Hugh got away as soon as he could. He never flattered himself that he knew De Roffa and trusting the man was impossible. The manner and the matter of this colloquy much exercised his mind. Before it, he was sure enough that whoever De Roffa chose for the new mayor would be none of his familiars. Having had five years or more to make friends, De Roffa did nothing towards it - and then would do all in an hour. It was something sudden. Even more than the offer of the mayoralty, the way the talk had gone troubled him. It was queer enough that De Roffa should ask for alliance and take what terms he could get, but much queerer his tone of genial fellowship. What had happened, or what was to happen that made him afraid?

There came into Hugh's head the parable of the unjust steward. "I am resolved what to do that when I am put out of my stewardship they may receive me into their houses. . . . 'How much owest thou unto my lord?' 'An hundred measures of oil.' 'Take thy bill and sit down quickly and write fifty.'"

It might well be that Warwick had quarrelled with De Roffa and designed to have another constable in Hampton. The very leaving De Roffa, who had been his lieutenant in

all things, exiled from him spoke of loss of favour. But what would it serve De Roffa to make friends with the town? He could not hope to hold it against Warwick's power. "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness that they may receive you into everlasting habitations." The parable failed there. No mayor of Hampton, Hugh Camoys or another, had security to offer to Sir Giles de Roffa if he broke with his master. There remained the indubitable disturbing fact that De Roffa was not the man to seek alliance with Hugh Camoys for nothing.

Hugh gave it many anxious hours in vain. News came to him week in week out from half England, trusty news from men of substance, and all told of peace, but for rumours that Dame Margaret, the indomitable queen of King Henry, was devising a new onslaught. But she always was. No more fear of her than any time in five years past. King Edward was firm in the saddle. It was not to be thought of that De Roffa meant to turn to her lost cause.

Hugh could not see his way, but he had to act. The old mayor died and was buried. Tom Overey was summoned to the castle and came back mightily solemn to take counsel with Hugh and his mother. "Good faith, brother, he has chosen the best man," said Hugh heartily. But Tom shook a heavy head. "Has he not, mother?"

"Alack, the poor child will never smile again," she said and looked at Hugh queerly.

"It should have been yours, brother," said Tom Overey. "All men know that."

"No, by St. Denis, I am too light. You are a man men trust."

"Well. Stand by me, brother," says poor Tom, oppressed with greatness, and they kissed.

That day in the dusk came to Hugh's house a horseman who when he took off his cloak in the light revealed himself Osbern Shirley.

"Am I welcome, old lad?" he smiled, for Hugh's eyes examined him curiously.

"With all my heart." Hugh held out his hand shyly, was taken in Osbern's arms and embraced.

"Out on you for a queer, cold fellow," says Osbern.

"God bless you," said Hugh. They stood apart and looked each other over, Hugh something awkward and grave, Osbern smiling. He was grown sturdier, but still a light, blithe fellow and his comely face had learnt assurance. He was brilliant in a coat of red velvet slashed and puffed with silver. He had a rich golden chain and a knight's spurs of gold. "I have often wondered," Hugh said. "You have risen high."

"Why, it is a far cry to the old days on the salt marsh," Osbern laughed. "But you have travelled some way, too, you rogue." He put his hands on Hugh's shoulders. "A noble long gown and furred like a lord's! A great merchant, look you."

"It is nothing. I wear it in the house for my ease," said Hugh uncomfortably.

"And a mighty fine house, too!" Osbern looked round the room, which was hung with tapestry out of Flanders, and had silver from Milan on the sideboard and a bowl of blue glass with a golden rim and handles of gold that Contarini brought from Venice. "What, old Hugh, here be riches!" he laughed.

"I have had some good fortune."

"I warrant you. What are you now, man, mayor? Or sheriff or alderman?"

Hugh laughed. "Not I, Sir Osbern. I am only Hugh Camoys still"—he hesitated—"that loves you well."

"Go hang." Osbern slapped his shoulder. "Give me no sir, sirrah. I am no knight with you but Osbern, your brother."

"And my house makes you welcome," said Hugh eagerly. "You are kind to come to me."

"I come to a friend. There are none so many where I walk, Hugh. How is it with your mother?"

"She will be happy to-night and proud," Hugh said and he called her.

"It is you that are the lucky one," Osbern sighed. "Mine died alone and my father."

"God rest them," Hugh said, who had stood by their grave.

Eleanor Camoys came and made much of the great man and was by him most courteously entreated, for she had been faithful in admiration of him when he was nothing but Hugh's hero. They had good cheer for him and sat long and were merry.

When she left them, Osbern flung himself into a chair and filled his glass again. "By the ragged staff, but it is good to be back in Hampton. How goes the old town, lad?"

Hugh told him carefully and he yawned. He was civil about it, but he did not pretend that Sir Osbern Shirley could be at pains to understand matters of trade. "The sum is, you have prospered. It is well. Our old fox at the castle, he made no trouble for you?"

"Sir Giles?" Hugh smiled. "By my faith, he has so ordered it that we might forget he was there. Such a lord constable merchants like well."

"Ha!" Osbern was thoughtful. "So I have heard men boast of their wives. Is he so quiet then?" And with that turned away from De Roffa to ask about Hampton folk and their fortunes. "Old Robin Aylward is dead then? One cur the more in the devil's kennel. How he harried you, lad."

"God give him peace, He was a broken man."

"Oh, piety!" Osbern laughed. "Who broke him, you rogue? Well, have you a mayor to your mind now?"

"Sir Giles has named Tom Overey."

"What, he puts a new man in? Tom Overey—do I know him? Oh, a dull, dumb dog is he, the mercer's fat son? So De Roffa would have a fool to serve him."

"I do not know that. If he would, he has chosen ill. Tom Overey is a cool, wise head, none better in Hampton, by my faith."

"Is he your man?" Osbern opened his eyes. "Nay,

if he is shrewd enough for you, he is shrewd enough for me. And how do you stand with De Roffa, lad ? ”

“ I ? Good faith, he uses me well when he is pleased to use me.” Hugh laughed. “ And I him, I hope. He likes the best and he pays good prices.”

“ Count his money, my merchant,” said Osbern and asked what De Roffa bought, and heard more than he wanted about Spanish wines and Italian goldsmiths’ work. “ What, your own ships go to the south lands ? By the ragged staff, you are an admiral of merchants.” He had much to ask of the Hampton ships, how many were at sea, how many in the river and of what size. “ Great fleets, by my sword. And the ships that De Roffa put in hand for the King, how goes it with them, has he hired them out to you rogue merchants ? ”

“ No, faith, we sail our own craft. Sir Giles has the King’s ships moored off the castle quay as custom was. You know that, Osbern.”

“ Why, yes, so it was. I warrant you I should not know the haven, you have so many sail. You must have bred mariners since my day to man them all.”

“ We have men enough. The truth is, we always had, but we have learnt to use them.”

“ Ay, ay. You have done mighty well. I vow I should have stayed in Hampton.” His eyes gleamed. “ I could have made something of this, my merchant. Will you give me a fleet to sail against the Soldan ? ”

“ I would well you had stayed, Osbern.”

“ Why, you may see me back yet. How is it with the fair maid of Du Pré ? ”

It was a little while before Hugh answered that. “ The Lady Christine ? She is with the nuns at Romsey.”

Osbern laughed. “ God have mercy upon them ! She is no gentle guest for a nunnery, I vow. Have you seen her, lad ? ”

“ Once : and again. My lady buys silks of me.”

“ How is she grown ? She promised to be a little slight thing of a woman.”

In Hugh's heart she was the very likeness of the Virgin, a Virgin that Contarini had shown him in a picture, saying to his horror that the girl had a fine, heathen soul in her, but he did not tell Osbern that. "The Lady Christine is like her mother, I think," he said.

"Fie, fie, like an alabaster woman on a tomb! Why, lad, you have no better blood than a fish. Did you never look on a maid and think what she was for?" Much against his will Hugh blushed. "Oh, rogue. You think a thousand things more than you say, I warrant you. You know the girl well enough. What, I remember you with her on the hills. I vow you have been about her."

"But it is not so," Hugh said quietly, white where he had been red. "I do not think as you think, Osbern. This does you no honour."

"God have mercy, I ask your pardon, holy father. Nay, give me your blessing."

"Why then, God bless you."

"Well said!" Osbern laughed. "Ay, you win that course. Come, here is no unkindness. Ride out with me to Romsey and show me my lady nun."

"If you will," Hugh said slowly.

As late as they parted Osbern was early up and out. He had been walking in the town, so he said at breakfast, for the love of old times. When they took horse he beguiled the way with memories. And Hugh rode silent: he also had not forgotten boyhood, but he had no triumphs to remember.

It was pleasant and bitter to watch Osbern: he made a noble, gallant figure. His splendours were hid under a silver cloak, but it rippled and shimmered about him and he had a knightly grace in the saddle, and his horse, a great chestnut charger, was wildly eager to make play with him. Ay, the very picture of a perfect knight, God bless him. Who could see him and not love and honour him? Yes, he was born for that. He always led, there was never any could stand against Osbern.

"Out on you, lad, you lag behind like a groom," Osbern

cried. "You and your fat nag! Ride him, ride him."

Hugh looked down at his grey cob, at himself. They matched for colour. He had shed the long gown of Osbern's mockery, he was in doublet and hose of decent dark serge. A groom? Why, not that, but my lord's steward, perhaps, jogging behind his master. Yet it did well enough in Hampton. Osbern need not jeer. He could go fine, too, if he chose. And a pretty fellow he would be, his hulking, heavy shape in red and gold. As for riding, why, he and the grey could go all day and all night, had done at need, and if that chestnut could hold with them, it was a marvel. Fie, boy's thoughts, child's thoughts. What was it in Osbern that made a man feel a child? "We be slow folk, the grey and I," he smiled. "Be patient, good knight."

When they came down into Romsey and drew near the abbey gate: "Do you speak. You are known," Osbern said. So to the lay sister who opened Hugh said that Master Camoys begged leave to wait on my lady Du Pré. She smiled and called another to take their horses. "Ay, you rogue, well known," Osbern said.

My lady was lodged in the guest house of the abbey in a room of sombre state hung with black and gold, but the casements were open to the breeze that blew through the sunshine across the river meadows. She sat in a black gown with a white wimple hiding hair and neck framing her white face, a bowl of wild hyacinths before her and her thin hands moved among the flowers. "Master Camoys?" She looked up. "It is too long since we saw you." She saw Osbern. He had left his cloak with his horse. He stood beside Hugh in all his splendour, crimson and silver, bowing, smiling. "Who is this, sir?"

"Sir Osbern Shirley, my lady."

"Osbern Shirley, your ladyship's poor servant, who begs leave to kiss your hand again."

"Sir Osbern," she repeated, some faint surprise, wonder, contempt, something he did not relish in her tone. "I give you joy, sir." But she did not give him her hand. "My Lord Warwick is in Hampton again?"

"Not at this present, my lady. He greets you well and would know if you have any commands for him."

"I thank him for this honour," she said. "What is the news in Hampton, Master Camoys?"

"There is none, my lady. We abide in peace."

She looked with a cold curiosity at Osbern, whom she had not told to sit, who made no sign of going. "And at Court, sir?"

"The King grows fat!" Osbern smiled.

"The King grows fat!" a small low voice repeated. "And Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. It is Scripture."

Osbern swung round. Between the black curtains at the door, slight for all her woman's years, in a clinging gown of the Virgin's blue, stood Christine. Osbern's hat swept the ground as he bowed.

She looked over his bent crimson back. "Why, Master Hugh," she said, "have you been sailing the seas again?"

"No, faith. It is not my trade."

"A proud fellow. What would you have? The first time you went to sea you were a prisoner, the second time an admiral, the third time, who knows your worship might be a king. What would you have? I vow I thought you had sailed away to take France, it is so long since you came to our holy lodging. I pray you what are you now, you are over something greater each time you deign to look on us?"

"I am Hugh Camoys to serve you. With all manner of merchandise."

"I would have the Soldan's turban to make me a wimple and the Pope's ring to fasten my girdle."

"Why, lady, the holy father's ring were big enough to make a girdle for you," Osbern cried.

She looked at him; her eyebrows went up, her little chin came out; she looked at her mother. "It is Sir Osbern Shirley sent by my Lord Warwick to greet us," my lady said.

"Sir Osbern," she murmured in a tone of awe and made

him the finest curtsy that ever Hugh had seen. "My lord does us too much honour."

"There is none who can do that, Lady Christine."

"Sir, my poor prayer is no man should try."

"God have mercy, how shall I answer that, lady?" Osbern laughed.

"I vow there be keen wits at Court, sir."

"Why, would you live in a nunnery all your days?"

"Sir, I like to live with those who know what I mean."

"Fie, what should a man know?"

"A woman, sir."

Osbern laughed. "It is not all the world."

"I am content with my half. Pray, sir, are you?"

"How shall I say so while I see you?"

"What he says!" She turned to Hugh standing awkward and heavy. "What, that is no matter. Give judgment, Master Camoys, would you be a woman, if you were born again?"

"No, lady," says Hugh solemnly. "I should be afraid. It is in my mind the woman has the worst of life."

"Look upon him," she laughed. "He would not be a woman if he could. He hath no courage for it." And indeed he looked of all things most unwomanly, big, many-cornered, sunken eyes gloomy with thought under a mass of brow, and even my Lady du Pré's wan face was constrained to a smile.

But Osbern would have none of this. "Do you call me false, lady?" he cried.

"God save me!" She drew to her mother. "Sound trumpets, a challenge! Rest you fair, gallant knight, I did not call you, no, not I. Ride on."

"Nay, this must be made good for your honour. What I said was not in my heart—thus you accused me. And I swear by your bright eyes, I have said no word to you but as my heart bade, nor will say ever. Do me right, lady. I am your suppliant." He knelt to her.

"What is it the fellow talks of? I cannot tell. Sir, can you?" She laid her hand on Hugh's arm.

"It is whether he wanted to be a woman," said Hugh solemnly and again my lady had to smile.

"God deliver us!" she sighed. "What minds these men have! Why, that was a hundred years ago. I am grown a grandmother while they dally." She yawned. "I remember. I was saying that the honest half of the world is woman. And so it is, as I am a maid. Master Camoys, judge between us. Deliver me from this weary knight. The women are the honest men, are not they?"

Then Hugh said, "This is true, the most honest soul that ever I knew is a woman."

She was pleased to take that for herself, she made him a curtsy, smiling, and over her shoulder called to Osbern, "Go your way, sir knight. You are down."

"I was thinking of my mother," said Hugh solemnly. And for the third time my lady smiled.

Osbern, since nobody cared for his kneeling, got on his feet again. "I allow Mistress Camoys," he said. "She is a woman right worshipful. Look what a son she hath borne. But what of that? One honest shall not save all the rest."

"Hold your peace, sir. It has gone against you. The holy father has spoken and the case is judged. Women are the honest folk. Oh, sir, I thank you. Now I abide among women with a light heart."

"What, it has been heavy here among the nuns?" Osbern laughed.

"Not so, fair knight. Never till I saw you. Women, as our holy father saith, have the worst of life. It is because men bring upon them travail and sorrow. But in a nunnery we live to ourselves and go happy."

"I have seen you happy enough on Marwell Down."

"Pray you, Sir Osbern, who showed you my heart?"

"What if it were my own?"

"Oh, sir, be wary. That is a false friend, that says the thing which is not to flatter you."

"Why, is it flattery when I say the Lady Christine cannot be happy unless she is free?"

"No flattery, no, but bitterness. By mine honour, good knight, the Lady Christine is less a fool than you think her. She has never been free all her days and yet goes happy at whiles. Why, who is free in this world? None that ever I knew. Oh, wise Master Camoys, are you free, sir?"

Hugh considered that sombrely while she smiled. "I think we do all labour to make in a manner bonds for ourselves," he pronounced. "Such is our life we must do so."

"God have mercy, you should be a priest," Osbern cried.

"He is in the right. We are all bound," Christine said. "Go your ways, sir knight, your chain is gold."

"And what is yours, fair lady?"

"Sir, I do not wear it on my bosom." She made him a curtsy; *she came to her mother's side. The eyes of both* announced that they had heard enough.

It was wonderful to Hugh that Osbern contrived to kiss their hands: still more wonderful that he went out of the abbey uplifted, swaggering, smiling to himself.

He set a merry pace through the town and when Hugh came up with him at last. "Ha, old lad," he laughed, "that is a wench knows how to keep you sharp set for her. She hath a spirit, what?"

"Yes. She hath a spirit," Hugh said.

Osbern swore a gallant oath in her honour. *She was* grown to a rare fine shape and bore herself nobly—why, a man's hand could grasp her waist; but she stood straight as a bolt, and how the grace of her bosom flowered! Good proud blood in her, she had that by birth. Look how the old dame carried it, widowed and withered and all. Her blood, why, a man could see it move in her, she was so white. . . .

Thus he talked while they rode over the heath, till out of a clump of birch another horseman joined them with a "God speed you fair, gentles. What, Master Camoys! And who is he so ghostly in a silver veil? The noble Sir

Osbern, by my life! I kiss your hands, sweet knight. But I pray you, why do you wrap yourself in a cloud like an heathen god?"

Osbern looked hard at the lean grin of De Roffa and grew red as he looked. "Give you greeting, my Lord Constable. How is it with you?"

"Well, sir, well. But lonely. This is not kind to grudge me your company. And why the cloud, I pray you? You shine forth like the sun. Was it kindness to your lady lest you should dazzle her? Great Jove, he went a-wooing in a shower of gold, but Sir Osbern, he is more delicate, he puts on a silver mist. Hark in my ear, Master Camoys, does she melt to him? I would make ready my wedding garment betimes."

"Sir, you are merry with me," Osbern cried.

"I promise you! When fair knight comes to woo a maiden fair is it not matter for mirth? I vow I could set you to music. Come ride with me to the castle and we will make good cheer."

"I thank you, my lord, I dare not stay."

"Sir, this is not kind. You give a night to our merchant here and have none for me. This is not friendly."

"Oh, you keep good watch in Hampton," Osbern sneered.

"I thank you. So I do. And good welcome for my friends."

"I have told you, I cannot stay, my lord," Osbern cried. "Fare you well." He put spurs into his horse and dashed away across the heath making for the London road.

De Roffa met Hugh's wondering eyes with a solemn face. "God have mercy, what have I done, Master Camoys?" he said. "What ails the good knight?"

"You mocked at him, my lord."

"And therefore he runs away. What a bold knight is he!"

"Do him justice, my lord. He is bold enough."

"Bold he is. Why did he run?"

"It is what I ask myself. But I think you know the answer."

"And Hugh Camoys knows nothing," De Roffa smiled. "Always he knows nothing. Thus he thrives."

"This I do not know, by my faith."

"Our pretty knight, he spent a day and a night with you. What was his talk?" Hugh did not answer.

"Ay, love him well," De Roffa laughed.

"Sir, so I do."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend."

"My lord, I pray you tell me true, what danger is there for him?"

"Now, by my faith, I spoke no danger to him, I spoke of dinner."

"Your cys speak, my lord."

"Not of him. Let him be, he is nought. I think of myself, Hugh Camoys. Yea, and of you and of my town of Hampton. This popinjay came to spy out the land. I will be sworn he asked you of the town and the ships and the mariners."

"It is true."

"If my Lord Warwick sought news of Hampton, he might have had it from me who served him when this pretty knight was a crawling babe. But I am not trusted. My lord changes his loyalties and doubts I may change mine. My lord is out with King Edward and would set up King Henry again. What do you say of that, my merchant?"

"I say—I say the world is upside down."

De Roffa laughed. "Yea, verily. And how shall we stand?"

"I cannot tell."

"Why then, with which shall we stand?"

"Good faith, my lord, I know nothing of wars. I am for peace."

"Amen, friend. So say I. But how shall I find it? King Edward may not stand without Warwick, I think.

Warwick cannot stand without King Edward, I doubt.
If the mad King Henry comes to his own again with the
wolf Margaret to guide him, we are all meat for the butcher.
You have said. The world is upside down."

CHAPTER XVI

KEEPING THE PEACE

IN the months that followed Hugh learnt more than any other man had known of Giles de Roffa, and was edified thereby. The purpose of De Roffa was simple. Whatsoever king should reign he would be Constable of Hampton. But to that end he used much guile, and Hugh to whom, needing his help, he showed each move, must needs admire his subtlety, his resource, his wary judgment. All the spring Warwick lay in Calais making his preparations, and De Roffa was very loyal with promises. He would watch the southern ports, he would watch the Channel, not a Hampton ship should go to King Edward. But none went to Calais. In the summer Warwick brought over his armament to Kent and defeated the King and took him prisoner. The victory was hardly won before De Roffa was offering men and ships. And all the while the dues of Hampton went faithfully into the exchequer at Westminster, whoever might be its master. Impossible for any man of either side to find a fault in the loyalty of the Constable of Hampton.

In the new year King Edward broke loose and rallied his friends about him, and hurried horsemen came to Hampton day after day calling upon De Roffa to make ready, to muster every man and march north and join Warwick. He sent them back one after the other with messages of good hope. When he had made all safe—a French raid in Poole Harbour must be looked to—a rising for the King was threatened in the west—he would show his arms there and presently march by way of Salisbury.

And so he did, in time to meet news that King Edward was beaten again and gone to exile in Flanders. Then he wrote to Warwick his exceeding joy at the good tidings and hurried back to Hampton and took his ships out to sea upon a threat, as he advised my lord, of a fleet hired by the Duke of Burgundy. So zealous in Warwick's service was the Constable of Hampton. He came back, having found, as he wrote, a squadron of pirates, whereof he had sunk one and captured one, the rest escaping in the night, and out of the prize he made bold to send my lord some suits of good Flemish armour and a tun of Burgundy wine. "Does your soul sweat?" he grinned at Hugh who had to provide all this for him at a mean price. "Never grudge it, merchant. You are gross enough. Look upon me, who am false to my good lord and run upon damnation for your sweet sake."

"It is well if it is wise," said Hugh. "Would you be pacified with a gift of toys, my lord?"

"I? I am not Warwick. I would have a constable hang in chains who served me as I serve him. But I would not have cast off the men that made me like him. I would not have set out to ride two horses. Let be. I know my Lord Warwick. He will swallow all."

And so he did. De Roffa had thanks for his gift and his good service and assurance that my lord loved him well. And Warwick was master of England and brought the mad King Henry out of prison and made alliance with his wild Queen, and De Roffa still ruled in Hampton.

Yet Hugh judged him not wholly selfish in his craft. He might have fought the fight for his own hand another way—as Warwick his master fought—staking all that he could command to win more power. That was the way of his kind, these knight retainers of the great lords. Where was another who, made Constable of Hampton, would not have flung the town into the fight, ships and men and money, for the side which he judged must conquer? Thus De Roffa might have won what others had won, forfeit lands, a barony, high office. That he lacked confi-

dence who would be the conqueror was nothing. He could change sides when fortune turned, like other men, and be more richly paid for it, and none was shrewder than he to be ready for the coming turn of the balance. If he had used the cunning he spent upon doing nothing in bold action, he would have been much more than Constable of Hampton. Impossible to suppose he did not know it. With open eyes he chose to keep the town at peace. Let it be counted to him for righteousness.

Hugh was tempted to believe that he had in De Roffa a man after his own heart, a man who despised the ways of war, saw nothing better in this world than peaceful thriving and held it his honour to ensure that for all and sundry. But to this creed he could not well fit the lonely sardonic man, who delighted in his guile and kept his archers in keen training and rich equipment and cared for nothing else but his Italian trinkets and his learned books. He was not eager after money. He neither dabbled nor meddled in the Hampton trade. It seemed to Hugh he had nothing to live for. That he accounted his manner of life an art and loved it was not within the imagination of Hugh Camoys.

Through the end of the year and the winter Warwick held his power. In the spring King Edward sailed from Flanders with Burgundian arms and made good his landing on the lonely shore of Holderness and moved southward, rallying men to his standard in each county as he came. Again horsemen thundered into Hampton day after day bearing Warwick's commands that the constable should march with every man and horse, threaten what might to port and shore and sea.

"By the ragged staff," De Roffa smiled, "the hour hath struck now, Master Hugh. I may not deny him. I march."

"I am sorry for it."

"My own heart is not light. I see no good fortune, however it goes. Death of my life, we must do as we may. Man your walls day and night and if any come

in arms hold them in parley. You have the trick of it. For the seaward side"—he pulled at his lip—"fear all things. Keep your ships under the wall." He held out his hand. "We have done well together, you and I."

"God bring you safe to be our lord again," Hugh said.

But De Roffa laughed. "All days end."

He beached the King's ships that he had built on the mud beyond the castle; he left a handful of archers, and at dawn he marched without a banner or trumpet-sound and sent the last of Warwick's messengers on before to tell how he had seen the constable set out with all his power.

After a week and a day the watch on the North Gate gave warning that an army was coming upon the town. But in a little while it was seen that the ranks wore De Roffa's red doublet and De Roffa himself rode in the van. The gates were opened, and silently as they had gone they marched into the castle again.

As his duty was, Mayor Overey presently repaired to the castle to give the constable welcome, and he took with him Alderman Camoys. De Roffa was walking in the little garden of the inner ward, where primroses and tiny daffodils and lilies bloomed among the stone. The level bar of his brows lifted: "What news with you?"

"My lord, we have none," said Tom Overey.

"Ha. Wait awhile. You will not lack."

"We do thank God you are safe, my lord," said Hugh.

"The good God," De Roffa shrugged. "He earns many thanks easily."

"How has it gone with my Lord Warwick?"

"He has found out that it is hard to ride two horses. He called his friends and his enemies to follow him. And some of his friends hurried to King Edward and some of his enemies held off to wait for Queen Margaret. Yet enemies and friends he had under his one banner and to his enemies he gave the vanward of his battle." De Roffa laughed. "I tell you truth, my friend. Oxford had the right of his line and Somerset the centre, who

hated him like death. It was on the high heath at Barnet they fought, no lucky ground that, for Warwick's banner. Edward came upon them in a fog—ay, that was fit—and the archers went for nought and they fell to it, body to body. Richard Crookback had the vanward for Edward and he encompassed Warwick, and Edward held up the main battle. They be cold, cunning captains and the Crookback hath something of the devil in him. By the body of God, George of Warwick should have weighed his strength before he set up his banner against them. But this fight was lost when the battle was set in array. As soon as it came to push of steel, Oxford was away fighting for his own hand and Somerset's men crying they were betrayed, and they fled together, and the Crookback closed upon Warwick and hewed down every man. He leaves none to make him trouble to-morrow, Richard of Gloucester."

"God have mercy!" said Hugh. "My Lord Warwick?"

"They caught him as he fled to his horse," De Rossa grinned. "He is dead and damned before me. Thus much have I gained by my policies, Master Hugh."

"God grant him peace," Hugh murmured, and Tom Overey bowed his head and crossed himself.

But De Rossa shrugged. "He never wanted peace in this world. I warrant him, he will be gathering a party in hell to set up a new Devil. Good fortune to him! He was my true lord once."

"I pray you, sir, have you any word of Osbern Shirley?"

De Rossa laughed. "Ay, you are a man of heart. You bleed for your friends, God requite you. Why, if your Osbern did his duty he is bled and sped. I know nothing of the popinjay. But I would not buy a mass for him yet. He is not the man to fight out a lost field."

Hugh bowed and turned to Tom Overey who had been some time anxious to escape from talk which scared his simple soul.

"Wait a little, wait a little," De Rossa said. "You

have no news, my masters? I have news of your own shore. Queen Margaret is landed with a power at Weymouth."

"God be praised she came not here," cried Tom Overey.

De Roffa grinned. "This you owe to your noble constable's fame."

"I well believe it," said Hugh. "But what now, my lord? Will she strike at Hampton?"

"It would please me well. I could show my good lord Edward how loyal to him is Giles de Roffa." He laughed at their horror. "Never fear, my masters. I have no fortune now. She will not come. She breaks for the west. A fool! She has missed her hour as she hath done ever. She might have saved Warwick. Now Edward and the Crookback will eat her up."

"God send us peace again," said Hugh.

"God hath sent us King Edward," De Roffa grinned.

With this they were let go and when they had made their way home, each man working upon his own thoughts, Tom Overey spoke his judgment. "That lord is possessed of a devil. God send us a good deliverance."

"Amen, brother," Hugh said. "Yet judge him not. He speaks in the bitterness of his heart."

It was plain to him that the time had not come for the town to break with De Roffa. For his own part he would still believe the man had goodwill in him. Let him talk like the fiend so he acted aright. Whatever he was, they might have sore need that the archers of the castle and the archers of the town should shoot roundly together. With landings on the southern shore, with the remnants of shattered armies seeking safety, any day might bring an assault on Hampton. The end might be as sure as De Roffa declared it, but before King Edward could establish his power there was time enough for Hampton to be destroyed. Even when he had the land at his will, they would not be safe. De Roffa plainly feared to lose castle and lordship. If Edward counted it treason to have given him no help in his need, why, if he had but a mind to

squeeze money out of a rich town it would go hard with Hampton.

"Fear all things," said De Roffa and said well. The need of the hour was good watch and ward. By the kind favour of God the town was right brotherly, no man would make a faction or betray the commonweal. They would stand together whatever came.

So mayor and aldermen ordered it, none murmuring, that the watch on the walls must be kept night and day and every man and boy go daily to the butts on the salt marsh: that no ship should sail till the mayor gave leave, and none lie out in the river but all by the quays or close under the town walls, and a fast boat was sent out to watch off Calshot and bring timely warning of any ships making for the haven.

But the first news of Queen Margaret they had came by land, a letter on business from Cardonell, the Cotswold flockmaster, to Hugh which said at the end, as a man might write of the weather or the look of the apple-blossom, that King Edward had fought Queen Margaret in Tewkesbury mead and her son's blood was on the ground in a great slaughter, so he counted to have the roads safe again presently.

It was taken to De Roffa. "Ay, ay. This time Edward makes sure," he grinned. "Her son is dead. I promise you her husband will soon be with the saints in paradise. God save King Edward! Fie, no need for God here. Edward hath provided for all. None is left to challenge him. Unless brother eat brother, Master Hugh."

"God have mercy, my lord, what have you said?"

"Why, what?" He leaned his chin on his hand and his level brows came down as he stared at Hugh. "Would you tell tales of me? Be sure of your price, friend. They are a cold breed, these brethren."

"You do me wrong, my lord. There is no man in Hampton has ill to say of you."

De Roffa laughed. "You are wise, you are wise. I am some little thing yet."

It was in the end of that week the boat from Calshot came back to the town quay. Her captain told that he had seen two hoys making for the haven. They came out of the west, he judged them west-country craft on their lawful occasions. So he kept his station waiting to speak with them. But as they drew near he saw they had too many men aboard for honest traders. Then he beat up for Hampton, and as he made sail they hailed him and bade him close, and when he held on sent a flight of arrows after him, whereof he had no hurt but his helmsman wounded and his mainsail shot through and through. For a little they made chase, but he gained fast and they went about and the last he saw of them they lay to off the haven.

The alarm bell was rung. Boys and men came running back from their archery in the salt marsh to mount the wall, and De Roffa strode into the guildhall, where mayor and aldermen sat in council. "What now, my masters?" he grinned. "Who threatens my good town that you call to arms?" They told him the story and he played with his chain. "Two hoys out of the west? Why, they breed bold pirates in Cornwall," His level brows lifted and he looked from man to man.

"There is no Cornish pirate would snatch at a ship in Hampton water," said Tom Overey.

"Master Mayor, I have known them snatch a ship under the walls of Calais."

"We will keep good watch they take none here, my lord."

"Why, so you do. Who thought to put this fast boat at Calshot?"

"It was the mayor's order," said Hugh quickly.

"By my sword, there is a shrewd wit," he nodded at Tom Overey and laughed. "And what are Master Mayor's orders now?"

"My lord, we have manned the wall. We keep watch all night."

"Good; my lord, give us your counsel and stand by us," said Hugh quickly.

"Heart and hand, friend. Now look you, reason is they should try no more. They are but two hoys and they must know you are warned. If they were cunning Cornishmen, they would be gone. But I think it is not so. Your Cornishman would not have snapped at that guard boat unless he could make sure of her. My mind is these be broken men of the rebels that have escaped from my lord the King and they must have more shipping to carry them overseas. They will come on and fight blind." He shrugged. "A man is bold who has lost all. Give them no mercy, my masters. That is best."

"We look for your power to aid us, my lord."

"Count on that. The best of my archers line the wall above the quay. I warrant you none of the King's ships shall be taken. Look to your own. If any be lost King Edward will reckon hard with you. He had no aid from Hampton in his need. If you give his enemies comfort in his victory, God help you, for there is no help in man." He grinned at them and strode out.

"My mind is that lord hates us," said Tom Overey.

"Nay, brother, fear is upon him," Hugh said; "but his counsel is good."

"Counsel! He gave none," Tom Overey cried, "so that he may blame us if aught goes amiss."

"And if all goes well, the honour is ours," Hugh smiled; "but look, brother, he bade us guard our ships. I read it that every ship which lies afloat should have men aboard, stout lads with bills and bows. Then the best archers, even as he said, may line the seaward wall. And for the rest, we need but a man here and a man there. Nothing threatens by land."

So they ordered it and were busy all the rest of that day, but the hoys did not come. Still through the dark of the spring night the men of Hampton stood to arms, and as it grew near the end of the first watch saw dim shapes moving on the face of the waters. With the flood the hoys stood on while the archers on the wall fitted arrow to bow and the men in the ships lined the bulwarks with bill and pike.

The helmsmen found more than the shape of the land to steer by. On the wall, aboard the ships, lanterns glimmered. The hoys must have known the town was awake and waiting before the first arrows came upon them. Still they held on, steering for the quay by the water-gate, and though flight upon flight of arrows fell aboard they ran alongside the moored ships and made fast. There was blind hacking and hewing, the men of the hoys forced their way aboard the prizes they had chosen, and by weight of numbers, by skill in arms, won the decks. A rush from the other ships hard by bore them back. Archers who dared not shoot on the swaying fight ran down from the walls to give aid. The men of the hoys were driven aboard their own craft, one cast off and fell away. They had counted on the turn of the tide to bear them off with the prizes: it might serve to save them. But there were Hampton men aboard, and on the short crowded deck the fight was so close they could not make sail. The other hoy was boarded, was taken, her men all down or beaten below or flung into the river. The boarders ran her alongside the drifting craft and joined the fight and carried her, too. Slowly with their freight of wounded and dead they were worked back to the quay.

It was glistening with lantern-light and busy. Tom Overey had a strong party marshalling the captives and marching them off to the prison under the Bar Gate; Hugh was gathering the wounded, some for their own homes, some for the hospital of God's House, some for the prison. So he worked with the grey friars helping him till he came upon the body of Osbern Shirley. He knelt down beside it, felt hand and bleeding head. He looked about him warily and gathered the body in his arms and strode away.

When he came back to the quay he found De Roffa, breastplate gleaming darkly in the lantern-light, talking with Tom Overey. "And how many are taken, Master Mayor?"

Tom Overey was always a bad man to meddle with when

he had work on hand ; he was bitter that so many of his Hampton folk had gone down. "I keep no tally," he growled, and thrust by.

De Roffa took him by the sleeve. "Hark you, sirrah, gather the rogues together and march them to the castle. I will make account of them."

"You come late, my lord. They be gone to the town prison."

"What of that ? Bring them to the castle presently."

"We be busy here. I can make no more work," said Tom Overey sullenly.

"Body of God, sirrah, do my will."

"Look you, my lord, we have fought our fight and had no aid from you. You come too late. We have lost many a man that your power might have saved us. Here is enough to do to look to our own."

"Ay, you shall find it enough," De Roffa said and turned away.

Tom Overey found Hugh at his elbow. "What is between you, brother ?" Hugh whispered.

"He wants the prisoners. I must go hale them out of prison again and muster them and march them to the castle."

"That hath an ill look."

"So he had ever. He is all villainy."

"Come, brother, we must be wary. Let us be first with the news of this to King Edward."

So a letter was written in which the Mayor of Hampton sent his duty to the King and told how certain two hoys manned by men who wore the colours of the Earl of Warwick had come by night and tried to seize the King's ships in Hampton, how the men of Hampton had fought with them and slain many and captured some fifty, and held them prisoners till the King's pleasure was known. Before dawn a horseman was riding hard on the London road with that.

In the morning De Roffa sent an archer to bid the mayor send his prisoners to the castle. He was answered that

King Edward had word of their capture and they were held at the King's pleasure. This brought De Roffa down to the guildhall in some state and with a smiling face. "Master Mayor, you are grown great. You deal with my lord the King like his good friend and brother. I give you joy. Come; what knaves are these that you love them so well?"

"No friends to Hampton Town, that is seen," said Tom Overey. "Who they be I know not, but they wear my Lord Warwick's colours."

De Roffa still smiled. De Roffa shrugged. "A coat is nothing, as times go."

"Nothing, by St. Denis. But deeds are much."

"Have you found any man of name or note among them?"

"I do not know my Lord Warwick's friends, my lord."

"What, have you not put them to the question, who they are?"

"It is no matter for us, my lord. We hold them all at the King's order whoever they be."

De Roffa laughed. "Wise folk are you." He turned on his heel and went out.

CHAPTER XVII

THE KING'S PLEASURE

NOT in the manner of Tom Overey would Hugh have dealt with De Rossa. He would (as indeed Tom once told him) have been civil with the devil, though he might obey the Scripture and resist him. If a quarrel had to be he would let the other man make it. But once De Rossa was defied, he saw nothing for it but to fight sturdily. To try making peace would let De Rossa know that he was afraid. And afraid he was. Osbern lay helpless in the house of the grey friars. Why De Rossa was eager to lay hands on the prisoners he could not tell : perhaps to gain credit for the fight, to prove how loyal, how zealous was the Constable of Hampton ; perhaps he feared some of them could tell of his playing double ; perhaps he knew of private enemies among them whose death he coveted—Osbern Shirley to wit. Whatever it was, Osbern would hardly come off with his life if De Rossa had news of him.

Father Nicholas, a little fatter, a little shorter of breath for the lapse of years, came into the room behind the counting-house, where Hugh welcomed the men whom he delighted to honour, a room of carven oak and painted-glass windows and silver cups and salvers. Father Nicholas gave him a blessing of some length.

He grasped at the friar's hand, his eyes asking a question.

"Nay, nay, he lives and will live."

"Praise God's loving kindness !"

"Amen, my son. And forget not the works of man."

Hugh called a serving-boy and there was set before Father

Nicholas a flagon of white Portugal wine and a goose pie, the boy smiling. "Mock not, child, mock not," the friar admonished him. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, a gluttonous man and a wine bibber." The boy fled, but the friar shook his great head at Hugh and groaned. "Look, now, how carnal is your thought. I bid you remember the works of man, and you must needs fill my belly!" He fell to heartily.

"Forgive me, father," Hugh smiled. "What should I remember but your good charity?"

"Your own," said Father Nicholas. "Bethink you. You have brought this son of strife to our poor house to be made whole, and we will do so by God's grace. But what shall come of it?" He shook his head again and drank deep.

"I pray you does any know who he is?"

"None but me and my brother Gregory. All else think him some poor mariner. Nay, there is no danger among us. We have kept many a man's dark secret. But what if some saw him borne to our house?"

"I do not fear it. I was swift in the night and none spoke with me."

"Yet here is Alderman Camoys hiding away a rebel that owes his head to a King which is a man of blood, and Master Mayor hath made a quarrel with this De Roffa to hold the prisoners which he coveted, that he might offer them up a sacrifice and redeem his favour. He will smell about the town like a bloodhound, he will defame you to the King to prove his loyalty."

"I fear it, I promise you," Hugh said. "What may I do, my father? Shall I deliver my friend to be slain?"

"Friend! What deed of friendship hath he done ever? To you or to any man?"

"You are bitter against him."

"Yea. I have watched by his bed."

"Good faith, you do him wrong. Friendship is not of deeds but of a man's heart."

"That were a right good creed. When will you live by

it? I pray you, have you told Master Mayor of your deeds of friendship?"

"God forbid. The mayor must think for the town. I may go my own way."

"And bear your own danger."

Hugh smiled. "You do not flinch, my father?"

"Nay, I will flinch and turn like a hare, come the need. I know not the man. I will deny him like St. Peter. I took him for a Hampton lad. You said he was. He was stricken and I cherished him. What would you, my masters? It is my duty. Alms for the poor friar."

"I will hold you scatheless, by my faith."

"To the devil with your impudence," said Father Nicholas, and wiped his mouth on his arm and rose. "God be with you, child. You have kept your soul alive. Which once I did not think. God give you joy."

In a little dark cell of the grey friars' house Osbern Shirley turned upon a pallet of straw and yawned and swore. The singing of evensong was in his ears and would not let him sleep again. He tried to rise, which was a work of time and oaths and pain, so little strength he had, so many an ache; but he did stand up, tottered with feeble knees to the window and holding on by the wall looked out upon the empty courtyard and laughed in pride at his achievement. A moment he stood, a queer figure, the rough grey gown that wrapped him shaking as he shivered, his haggard face dirty with a young beard, a bandage in his matted hair and slipping over his eyes. He turned, edged round the room leaning on the wall; but dizziness came upon him, his legs gave way and, having fallen, he crawled to his pallet and drew over him the other gowns which were his bedclothes and rolled himself in them and lay with chattering teeth.

Some warmth had come to him, but it was more by will than any comfort he found that he stopped his shivering when Father Nicholas came in and set down a pitcher. To that his eyes turned. The friar knelt beside him and put a hand in his bosom and was cursed. "Fie, child,

what have you done to this poor body? I left it sleeping warm enough."

"Your damned psalms woke me."

"Oh, wicked one! Thank God that you are still where you can hear His holy psalms. It is by no virtue of yours. If you will not be guided you will go presently where none sing. You have been out of your bed, rogue."

"I have been out of this horse's litter."

"God give you grace! It is a better bed than I lie upon, and you have two coverlets. What would you have? Six feet of a grave?"

"Not yet, father," Osbern laughed. "Content you, you shall not sing mass for me. I have been upon my feet."

"A fool are you, Osbern, and have ever been and will be."

"Amen, so be it. What is in that pitcher?"

"Good cows' milk, child. Say grace and drink."

"Milk, faugh!" said Osbern, and drank greedily.

"Benedicto benedicamus," said Father Nicholas, and crossed himself. "Give thanks, for shame, oh wicked one."

"Give thanks to the devil. Why, what should I give thanks for—that my lord is down and dead, that these greasy townsmen have slain the last of us, that I lie upon straw like a sick cow with no blood left in me?"

"Give thanks to God that he hath spared your wicked life."

Osbern laughed. "Ay, God hath dealt well by me. I am a broken man, by God's grace. But I am something hard to kill. By the ragged staff, I will mend all yet."

"Thou fool," said Father Nicholas fiercely; and then muttered a prayer and crossed himself. "Look, child, your lord and his ragged staff are broken and no man shall mend them ever. Yet you believe in the ragged staff who believe not in God."

"Ay, preach me to sleep," Osbern yawned. "But let me drink again first. Fie, what hog-wash it is! You are a scurvy host, friar. Out on you, do not grudge me man's

meat. Give me my strength back and I will not trouble you long, I promise you."

"Where will you go, child? You are a traitor against the King and every man's hand is raised against you."

Osbern laughed. "I fear no man. My time will come again. The King? Who is the King? He hath his hour now, he fled from us yesterday."

"You are dead, if any man know you live. Oh, fool, we be in peril each day we cherish you."

"Oh, fool," Osbern sneered, "what has a friar to fear? Your gown saves you."

"It was not I brought you here, it was Hugh Carnoys."

"Old Hugh!" Osbern chuckled. "Old Hugh o' the needle and thread, good lad. He would be in a sweat of fear."

"If De Roffa saw it, his life would pay forfeit."

"Ay, and mine, too. But Hugh will keep close, I know him. He takes never a risk, not he. Never fear him, friar. He will not blab on me. I lie safe enough."

"Speak no more, child. Thou wilt not better that," said Father Nicholas, and went out.

Some little while after came to Hampton King Edward with his brother, Richard the Hunchback, and my Lord of Worcester and a great array. At the North Gate the mayor met him with the keys of the town, which he was pleased to touch and give back again, calling Master Mayor right trusty, and the Hampton folk made a joyful noise. It was agreed that he had a noble presence and looked good cheer. They were mighty pleased with him. He was thought the very exemplar of an English King.

Through a jolly crowd he rode to the castle. The great gates stood open. De Roffa came forward with his keys. "My Lord Rivers takes this charge for us," the King said.

De Roffa bore that well. He bowed to the King, he bowed to Rivers and turned and raised his hand. His trumpets sounded, his archers gave salute and he led the King's array into the castle.

At the door of the keep he turned and came to the

King's stirrup and fell on one knee. "Good my lord—let me give you welcome. I had made ready some poor cheer. I pray you do me honour before I go."

"With all my heart, friend. This is kind."

"My most gracious lord," said De Roffa.

That night he set before the King a great feast and it went merrily. By all the signs of good fellowship there was nothing more intended against him. He was thrust into a place of honour. Men spoke of the past frankly, cruelly, but without malice. The King laughed at the dead and drank deep and talked bawdy. De Roffa could play that game as well as any, but when they were gone reclining to bed he paced the little garden in the dark working on doubts and fears, while he heard strange voices changing the guard.

Like Antony, however long he revelled o' nights, he would be early up. He was in time to see the gate open to admit a cart laden with a huge barrel. He sent one of his archers to ask what it was and heard that the town had sent a tun of rare Spanish wine for the King's table. "Grammerey," he sneered, "that must have cost the good town twenty marks," and he turned away thinking that the mayor was quick to play the same game as he—and like to gain as much by it.

The King bade him to breakfast, the King was told of the gift. "By St. George, you are all kind folk in Hampton, De Roffa," he said with his jolly laugh. "We must see this good mayor of yours. Now I think of him, you have caught me some rebels, you and he. Who are they?"

"I cannot tell, my lord. His worship keeps them close in his warehouse."

"What, do you send your prisoners to a merchant?"

"Not I. These be some rabble the townfolk took out of ships in the river."

"A bloody battle, I warrant you."

De Roffa shrugged. "Oh, fierce as Towton to these good merchants. A mariners' brawl, my lord."

"Ha! These prisoners are Warwick's men, they say."

De Roffa took a moment to think of his answer. "It may be, by my faith. Master Mayor is mighty secret. The town leaned to Warwick, my lord."

"Why how should that be?" the King laughed. "Here was the constable to keep them loyal."

"These merchants are proud in their cunning," De Roffa said. "Hear this mayor speak, my lord."

"I thank you for your good counsel," the King said, "I may ask for it yet." And he left the table, taking with him Rivers and Worcester.

De Roffa found none to bear him company. He was walking on the wall alone when Richard Crookback met him. "Ha, Giles! Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Moors and Persians." The hunchback put a hand in his arm and pinched it. "God mend your wit, man. What game is this you play?"

"None, my lord. I have been true man to King Edward. The game which I had to play was to give no help to Warwick while he had power and see this town sent none. Judge me, did I play it well?"

"Like the shrewd knave you are," the hunchback chuckled.

"And well am I paid. I am no more constable of Hampton. The King goes about to fix treason on me."

"Ay, there you blundered. God's wounds, man, I thought you were trying to bring off these prisoners. So did Edward."

"Am I mad, my lord? Nay, let him hang them all I am well content."

"You should have had their heads in a row on the castle wall to greet him. What, man, you know our temper. We like men's flesh set before us."

"I would have made you a meal with good will, my lord. These curst townfolk would not yield me their prisoners."

"Ha! Is that your tale? They would not trust War

wick's men to a man of Warwick's. God's blood, that will damn you, Giles."

"Nay, my lord, stand my friend. The town would not yield them, because the town hath a kindness for Warwick and would bring the rogues off."

"That hath a better smack. But Master Mayor has them safe in his gaol."

"All of them, my lord?" said De Roffa quickly.

"Why, look you, now your wit is working," the hunchback laughed. "Stand to it, man. What we want is a vengeance to make men fear. Give us that and all things shall be added unto you."

"I will do my endeavour," De Roffa smiled, "and with right good will, my lord."

The hunchback flicked his hand in the air as though he were brushing a fly between them. "And what is the truth of it all, Giles?" he said carelessly,

"My good lord?"

"Nay, man, I know you. You are no coward. Yet you would not stand out for us nor for Warwick. What have you worked for?"

"I have kept the peace," said De Roffa. "The more fool I."

"You are too soon, Giles. Wait awhile, wait awhile," the hunchback said.

So when he was bidden to the King's presence De Roffa had his plan ready. The King gave audience in the castle hall with his crookback brother on his right hand and Worcester on his left. Rivers the new constable brought in mayor and aldermen and the King was gracious and bade Master Mayor tell all the history of his fight.

Tom Overey was laboriously honest. He began at the beginning or something earlier and did De Roffa good service. It was made clear that De Roffa had been urgent with the town to keep watch and be ready for attack by land or sea. "What, Sir Giles bade you fear some dash of Warwick's rogues?" said Richard.

"He named no name that I know," said Tom Overey

carefully. "He bade us fear all things," and the King laughed.

So they came to the night of the attack, which in Tom Overey's mouth became a desperate battle.

"Well fought, mayor!" the lurchback laughed. "How many thousand came at you in these two hoys?"

"Thirty and three we have buried," said Tom Overey stolidly, "and some lie in the river. We have prisoners fifty and one. And a score good men of ours be dead in the fight."

"Twenty Hampton men," the King said. "How many of your men went down, De Roffa?"

De Roffa laughed. "No man of mine, my lord. This was a brawl on the ships on the river. It was over as soon as we heard it from the castle."

"At quayside it was fought," Tom Overey cried indignant, and went on to tell how.

"What, Sir Giles de Roffa, he bore you no aid?" the King said.

"Not a man nor a shaft." Tom Overey was plainly glad of the chance to say so. He never forgave the losses of that night. "Nought came out of the castle till all was done when my lord was down on the quay asking for our prisoners to be delivered to him."

"Well done, Hampton!" the King laughed. "Well fought, Sir Giles de Roffa."

"The tale is not false," said De Roffa "but it is cunningly told. I had the castle to guard and the King's ships. I left the town to look to their own, who had strength enough as is seen."

"You let a band of Warwick's men strike at the town and gave no help against them. When they were beaten and taken you came out and would have them delivered to you. You are faithful to your friends, De Roffa."

"My lord, I gave no aid to Warwick in the days of his power."

"Nay, nor to us neither," said the King.

"By my faith, to deny him was to stand for you."

The King laughed. "It is well I had others stand more boldly."

"Do me right, my lord. Should I go about to succour Warwick's men when he is dead and his cause is lost?"

At that Richard Crookback began to laugh. "You would not, God's wounds, you would not! I know you. Brother, that was well said."

"Ay, he has said something," the King said coldly. "Let him say why he coveted to have these prisoners in his hands."

"Ay, my good lord, that is the heart of the matter," De Roffa smiled. "Now we are come to it. I sought to make sure that justice was done upon them."

"It is Master Mayor has made sure of that."

"By your favour, my lord, that is more than I know. This I know, he would not tell me how many he had taken."

"You know well there was no time to count," cried Tom Overey.

"No time?" De Roffa laughed. "Ay, you were mighty busy when the fight was over."

Then for the first time Hugh Camoys spoke. "So please you, my lord, if Sir Giles has some matter against our mayor may we know it?"

"Fairly spoken," the King said. "Speak out, you," and he frowned at De Roffa.

"Ay, they bring you fair words now, my lord. They have been heart and soul for Warwick and I dared not march for you lest they should raise the town behind me."

"That is a foul lie," Tom Overey cried.

"Hold your peace, sirrah," the hunchback thundered.

"Let be. It hath all the look of a lie," the King said. "They were all for Warwick. Therefore they fought against his men while you lay quiet. Speak on, De Roffa."

"They fought for their own ships as merchants will. They knew not whom they fought, till the rogues were taken. Then they went about to save their prisoners."

"And therefore held the knaves to wait my pleasure. Speak on."

"All, my lord? I pray you, who lies in their prison of any note or name?"

The King turned. "How say you, Worcester?"

"There be some knights among them, some of good blood. I find no great one."

"It is as I thought," De Roffa smiled. "My lord, when this band seized the hoys at Dartmouth for their venture the leader was Osbern Shirley, Warwick's man of trust."

"After he cast you off," the King smiled.

"Osbern Shirley?" Richard said. "Ay, that is the knave made up the league of Warwick and the Lancaster lords. A cunning bold rogue. He fled away from Barnet field with a rabble and broke for the west. Bones of God, he will breed us up more trouble if he go free."

"It is what I fear, my lord," said De Roffa. "To Dartmouth he came and took two hoys and sailed for Hampton. He is a Hampton man and counted upon his friends here. He knew that I had ships of the King and would have snatched them from me with the town's good will. But he blundered on the merchants' ships like a pirate and they took him. Yet they have not held him. I pray you ask Master Mayor which way Osbern Shirley went out of his town prison?"

"He was never in it," Tom Overey growled.

"That I well believe," De Roffa smiled. "What became of him, my master? Come, speak, you know him well."

"I know Osbern Shirley: neither well nor ill, but I know him," Tom Overey said. "He was not of the prisoners we took nor of the dead we buried."

"That also I believe," De Roffa purred. "Look upon them, my lord, see how they are troubled."

And that indeed was true, for mayor and aldermen were bewildered and looked at one another and muttered, but Hugh said smoothly: "Give me leave, my lord. Troubled we are, for Sir Giles hath a strange way with us. Now is the first time ever he spoke to us of this Osbern

Shirley. Upon the coming of these hoys, though we gave him warning from the boat that we had on watch, not a word he said to us of what men they might be, though now it is seen he knew they were Warwick's men and Osbern Shirley as he saith their captain. And when he asked of us our prisoners not a word said he of Shirley, of whom indeed we hear only now that he came and had command. And all this Sir Giles will not deny."

"By the rood of Romsey, he cannot," Tom Overey cried.

"So now we must think it something strange that he brings up against us this Osbern Shirley to prove that we Hampton folk favoured my Lord of Warwick. Whereof also we now hear for the first time. And if we had sought to serve Warwick, we must have sent to him men or ships or money. But the truth is, he had nothing of us ever, no, not a mark. We serve no lord but the King nor favour any other."

"With your tongue you serve him right well," said the hunchback. "Yet answer me this, friend, where is Osbern Shirley?"

"My lord, he was not among those we took, he was not among those we buried. If he came, which I know not, he must needs be among those which were flung into the river in the fight. Why Sir Giles should put it upon us that we helped him escape, I cannot tell."

"Nay, friend, but I can," the King smiled. "Go your ways, you have done well. You are in our remembrance." Mayor and aldermen made their bows and went out. The King turned to De Roffa. "He that is caught in treason will often go about to fix treason on another. And this was well devised, Sir Giles."

"Treason, my lord? By my sword, I have been true man to you, who kept peace here and gave Warwick no aid while you destroyed him."

"And moved no man to aid me, nor loosed a shaft against his band when they struck at the town. I thank you as you merit. Rivers, have him in guard."

De Roffa, with the new constable's hand on his shoulder, rose with some dignity. "God send your majesty as loyal men as I am," he said.

"God forbid," the King laughed.

De Roffa looked at the hunchback, saw no help in that gaunt face and was marched away.

But afterwards, when the King had eaten and drunk his fill, Richard put in his word. "God's wounds, brother, you have borne something hard on De Roffa to give him prison for his portion."

"Ay, he is a man after your own heart, Richard."

"So be it. I never had but one cause, which is yours."

"Nor he any but one, which is his own. Are you answered?"

"Yea, I take it. And what then? I say he did his part. He dared not stand against Warwick, yet would not stand for him. God's body, he served you well. If you slay him you make too many fear for themselves who would be loyal enough."

"Let them fear," the King laughed. "That is our need."

And Richard put off his plea to a more convenient season.

It came when my Lord of Worcester had dealt with the prisoners. For he found twenty among them of note enough to be charged with treason and swiftly condemned them. In Hampton they died the horrible death appointed and their heads and the severed quarters of their bodies were impaled and set up here and there about the town. Taking the King in a mood of happy satiety after this vengeance, Richard spoke for De Roffa again and was granted his life and his liberty. The King was pleased to be merry. "Peace upon earth, goodwill towards men. Let him abide in Hampton county and each week pay his duty to my lord constable or he shall be outlaw. Are you content, brother?" he laughed. "I would not be harsh with a man of yours."

Richard bit his lip. De Roffa bound to live as a man of

nought where he had ruled, to wait upon his supplanter—this was right brotherly mercy. "The man is no man of mine, nor will be," the hunchback said.

"And so I think, brother," quoth the King.

But when Richard told De Roffa of the half-pardon it was accepted with a smile. "I pray you thank my good lord for me as becomes. It is well devised. I shall be here when you have need of me."

So De Roffa rode out from the castle and betook himself to a little house on the moor he had built for hunting in the days of his power and there lived humbly, and the King feasted and made merry.

But the Hampton folk bore the slaughter of those prisoners hard and were bitterly aggrieved that their town was defiled with the show of butchered bodies, and when the King and his train rode out of the castle, there was no greeting for him and the few that gathered to see him go stood silent and sullen.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LADY BY THE STREAM

FATHER NICHOLAS came into the inner room of Hugh Camoys and sat him down. "God bless all here," he said. "Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel. My son, you owe me twenty marks."

"With good will, father." Hugh began to tell them out.

"In faith, it is cheap enough. It is the price of deliverance, child. It bringeth a happy issue out of all your afflictions. The rogue is gone."

"God have mercy, father!" Hugh was shaken. "Here is folly. He has no strength yet."

"I warrant you. He hath been strong enough this week past. I am weary to the bone of him, so he fretted me. This night is he gone. By the East Gate he went and I marked him safe out of the town. Now may Israel say, had not the Lord been on our side—I would have delivered him to be hanged to be rid of him, so he plagued me. Fie! give me a cup of wine to wash him out of my blood."

"He has hard fortune, my father."

"God wot, so have I."

"I would to God I had known of this before he went."

"Therefore I told you nothing till he was gone."

"Whither shall he go?"

"To the devil in his own fashion. Nay, child, fear nothing for him. He hath good clothes on his back and twenty marks in his pocket and a right hard heart within."

"How was he dressed?"

The friar chuckled. "So that his worst enemy would not know him. Like a mariner. In the clothes that the Widow Wystard gave to our house when her man was killed. Roundly he cursed them. I gathered the silver to quiet him."

"He hath no friend anywhere."

"That I well believe," said the friar.

In the morning Hugh was up betimes and he took horse and rode to Romsey. But as early as he started, Osbern was there before him.

While the nuns were singing matins Christine came out of the abbey to walk in the river meadow. The hay was cut and carried, but the fragrance of it still rose from the grass on the bright morning air. She wandered this way and that, singing softly to the larks whose song came out of the sunlight, mighty tall with her high blue wimple, and her blue gown flowed about her so that she seemed to be borne on by the will of the wind.

She saw a man tie his horse to a willow and come towards her, a sombre, shabby fellow. He pulled off his cap, he smiled at her and cried, "God give you good morrow, lady fair. Here is your servant." He was on his knee kissing her hand before she was sure of him.

"Peace be with you," she said quietly. "What guise is this, Sir Osbern?"

"A king's attire. It has brought me to you."

"God save your majesty." She looked at him with wide eyes.

"A mariner's tarry frieze," he said. "So I come a-woo-ing, Christine. It is all I have. Do you bid me be gone?"

"Sir, you would have me curious. Content you, I am. Speak, for thy servant heareth."

"You know nothing?"

"Sir, I have put off the world. I live in holy innocence."

"My lord is dead and his power is broken. I was wounded and have lain long in hiding till my wounds were healed. Send word to Hampton that you have seen Osbern Shirley and the King's butchers will be out after

me. I must be gone over seas for my life. I have lost all else. And so I kneel at your feet, Christine."

"And will lose your life also for that!" she cried, looking wildly about her.

"If it is so, it is well enough."

"Oh, I thank you, I thank you. Shall I have your blood upon me? Ride and go, if you be a man."

He laughed. "I am man enough, Christine. And you are the woman to mate with me. I must have you, die or live."

"You have taken long enough to find it out."

"You know well it was always in my heart. You fought against me when I came to you with fair fortune and I—I held off to win something greater before I pressed you home. Well, I have lost all. I stand stark. Come to me now." He took her in his arms. "You are mine. You know it. Your blood cries to me." He found her body yielding upon him. "Come, you are weary of this cold nun's life. Life!" he laughed. "I will teach you to live, girl. You shall be mad for the joy of your own sweet delights." He buried his face in her bosom. "Christine! Christine! By my sword, I will bring you to fair honour. There is all to win. This butcher King will not lord it long. I know who will strike at him. We will over seas and join with the bands which gather there, Oxford and Richmond and their train. They will have good welcome for Osbern Shirley. You shall stand high, my lady," he laughed. "I have fortune for you."

But she drew away. "And I—I have no breath, sir," she said. "Nay, give me leave." She broke from him, turning in a swirl of blue gown, a lithe, quick creature. "Let me think what I am. Here I came as good a maid as any nun in Romsey and I am wooed till my heart is faint in me and mine eyes see dreams and I must heal a broken man and be an outlaw's bride and find fair fortune and be a great lady—God help me—what am I at last?—a queen? By mine honour, this is a many lives to live in a morning."

"And many you shall live with me, my qucen."

"Sir, I have only one, and that is my own."

"Give it me and it shall bear richly. Christine——"
he grasped at her and she shrank from him.

"Look! Look! Get you to horse."

But Osbern had no chance of that. Riding at his ease, falcon on wrist, De Roffa came over the meadows, he saw them, he set his horse going and was upon them. "What, Lady Christine, have you put off the veil? Who is your gallant? Osbern Shirley, by God's light! Here is a cony to flush in Romsey mead. Stand and yield you, sirrah."

Osbern laughed. "To what? To you? Yield to a rat! Go your ways, De Roffa. No man needs you now."

"I bid you yield in the King's name," De Roffa said, plucking at his sword.

"You false traitor," Osbern cried and leaped upon him with dagger drawn and clung to him in the saddle and stabbed him. They crashed down together and the horse plunged over them.

Christine caught the bridle and drew it away, crying, "Osbern, Osbern, let him be."

So Hugh found them as he came riding hard to their affray. He flung himself from his horse and seized Osbern and dragged him from De Roffa. "Hold your hand, brother," he cried, "hold in God's name"; but Osbern, blind with the rage of the struggle, grappled with him and turned the dagger against him. Hugh made sure of the dagger hand and held him fast, bearing him back and back, the heavier man by far, the stronger body to body, though Osbern twisted and writhed. "Look on me, brother. You know me well, I am here to save you."

"Hugh!" Osbern panted. "The devil sent you to meddle. Let me be. I will make an end of that damned Judas."

"Look where he lies. You have done enough already. Mount and ride or you are lost."

"I will make sure first."

"By my faith, you shall strike no more," Hugh cried and wrenched the dagger out of his hand. "Look, the town is coming!" There were lay sisters out at the abbey gate peering and calling to the townsfolk and the yeomen of my lady abbess. "Ride for your life. To Beaulieu, to sanctuary. By God's grace, we will provide for you yet."

Osbern broke from him, looked wildly at Christine who cried "Go, go," and ran to his horse and broke at a gallop through the gathering crowd.

Hugh knelt down beside De Roffa. The man lay senseless and bloody, but he breathed. There were wet wounds in his arms, his face was slit in a long red furrow; in his body Hugh saw no hurt, and opening his doublet to search came upon a shirt of mail.

Hugh stood up with a sigh. He was then reminded of the presence of Christine. "The man is not dead?" she cried. "He will not die?"

Hugh gazed at her, discovered with horror that she stood there holding De Roffa's horse. "Holy virgin! This is not right nor seemly," he said reproachfully, rebuking. "Go in, lady, go in," he took the bridle from her hands.

She laughed. "A quaint fellow are you. I go, sir. And I pray you what tale shall I tell?"

"Why, lady, the truth." Hugh was shocked. "You walked in the meadow and there came by one dressed like a mariner, then came this knight and challenged him and they fought and the mariner fled and the knight is down and bleeding."

"The truth!" she laughed, and swept away.

By this time some of the abbey yeomen were coming into the meadow and to one Hugh gave the horse and bade another fetch water from the river and himself knelt again by De Roffa and laved his brow.

The man moved and groaned and looked about him and tried to rise. "Be at peace, my lord," Hugh said. "Here is no more danger. Lie still and we will bear you to the abbey presently."

De Roffa sat up and Hugh put a knee at his back to sup-

port him. "Good Master Camoys!" De Roffa's bleeding face grinned. "Ay, he would be here. Let me be, knave." He scrambled to his feet. "My horse, come, my horse!"

Hugh started up too. "I pray you, my lord, do yourself no hurt. You are stricken. Let us bring you to the abbey and the good nuns shall bind up your wounds."

De Roffa climbed heavily to his saddle, but then must needs grasp at it and the yeoman who held his stirrup. "God's blood!" he muttered. "Stand fast, sirrah. My head swims. Hark you now. Which way went he?"

"Who, my lord?" says the yeoman.

"The knight that struck me."

"Knight, my lord! God save you, here hath been no knight."

"Rogue, you know him well. It was Osbern Shirley, the outlaw of Hampton."

"By St. Elffeda, I have seen no knight. Only a mariner that rode out of the meadow and broke through us as we came."

"It is he, fool. Which way is he gone?"

"What do I know? Into the town he went."

"Lead on, if God's name," De Roffa said, and bowed in the saddle, holding by the yeoman, rode to the abbey. Hugh looked about the meadow, picked up his hat and his falcon, which, hooded and blind, was hopping in circles. The things he bore at De Roffa's side and when they came to the gate delivered to the lay sisters waiting there and was forward to tell them what wounds Sir Giles had and bade them have good care of him, till Sir Giles broke that off with oaths.

Hugh waited meekly till he was done. "I pray you, my lord, shall I ride to your house and bid your men come to you?"

"Ride to the devil," said De Roffa.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VENETIAN'S COUNSEL

HUGH made his best speed back to Hampton and there wrote a letter to the treasurer of Beaulieu Abbey in this wise :

Right worshipful and my most reverend father, I recommend me unto you, and pray you if there comes one seeking sanctuary grant him good comfort in his affliction and hold him secret. Yet this I say not to lay a burden upon you, for wit you well there is no man's death on his poor soul, and moreover you shall be delivered of him right speedily by God's grace. When a boat is rowed to your abbey quay and they which are in it ask speech of you and say to you that they seek a mariner, then tell him here is safety and give him unto them. And what I may do for you I am and shall ever be ready to do it. I beseech almighty God send you as much reverence and worship of all men as oweth

Your servant

HUGH CAMOYS

This he sent by a trusty hand and went out to seek the master of his ship the *Trinity*. But the man lay drunk in a tavern.

Something shattered by that he came upon Contarini, who remarked it. "Have you lost a friend or a shilling, that you look so sour?"

"I have found my best captain drunk."

"You are all drunken dogs, you English, but what harm has the rogue done you? He will but lose a tide."

"I had work for him."

The two looked at each other with wary, calculating eyes. "What trick is this that a ship must sail on the moment?"

Hugh flinched and turned to see if any were near enough to hear that, and Contarini smiled. "I pray you drink a cup of wine with me, my lord admiral."

They came to Hugh's house and the inner room, and when the wine was on the table and the door shut, "So I have surprised a secret, my friend?" said Contarini.

"Sir, the truth is I have need of a ship which I can trust, and I dare not let the town know it."

"What is the venture?"

"To go round to Beaulieu River and take off a man who lies in sanctuary at the Abbey and carry him over to France."

"This is some wretch broken in your wars?"

"What he is, you need not know. So are you safer."

"Unless I know what I do, I do nothing."

"So be it. The man is one Osborn Shirley, which fought for Warwick against King Edward and is now accounted traitor."

"By St. Mark, I am weary of your King and your wars! What fools are you English that you must ever set up one King against another to harry you! Men that be more than the brutes have no need a King should rule them. We have had none in Venice for a thousand years and all the seas are ours and we have power and wealth to our desire and live the noblest fashion in Christenty. And you—you are barbarians that herd sheep for us. Have done with your Kings if you would thrive."

"Why, sir, we must do as we can." Hugh opened eyes of amazement: a vision of an English republic was to his practical mind something less real than a dream. "At this present my need is a ship."

Contarini frowned. "What is in your mind that you go about to save a traitor? That hangs you if it be known. Do you count this King cannot stand?"

"God forbid," said Hugh heartily. "I would have him reign for ever."

"It is the man then. Wait. Osbern Shirley. I have heard the name. He was Warwick's familiar. What is he to you?"

"He hath been my friend all his days."

"Can he tell anything against you? Did you plot with Warwick?"

"By my faith, not I. He could do me no hurt—nor would if he could."

"Do the King's men know——"

He broke off even before Hugh put a hand to his lips. There was the tramp of men in the street, a word of command, voices rose in the counting-house.

Contarini sipped his wine. "This Cyprus is worth all your Spanish. It hath a subtlety. It is like a woman in her autumn."

They heard Hugh's chief clerk explaining that the master was within, he was closeted with a noble gentleman of his familiars, he had given word that none should come in upon them. Then came De Roffa's laugh. "Ay, he would be private, I warrant you," and another voice said, "We must break upon his worship's privacy. Lead on, sirrah."

"Why, my lord, if you bid me, my master would not have me deny you," said the clerk smoothly. "I will go tell him your lordship is here."

"Nay, nay, you rogue, bring us in on them," De Roffa cried. "Which way is it?" Feet moved swift on the stair, the door was flung open. Hugh started up and stood bowing before my Lord Rivers, the new constable, and De Roffa, De Roffa with his arm in a sling and a bandage about his head, Rivers point device, a fine figure of a courtier.

"My lord! This is kind honour that you do me."

Rivers stared at Contarini, who rose at his leisure and stared back disdainful wonder. Rivers turned to De Roffa. "This is not he, sir," he frowned.

"Give me leave," Hugh said. "Here is the Admiral of the fleet of Venice, the Signor Contarini, my lord."

Rivers took off his hat, Contarini bowed. "Long life to the constable of Hampton," he said, and he gazed with bland curiosity at De Roffa.

"I pray you, my lord, how can I serve you?" said Hugh.

"Master Camoys, I am here to seek the traitor Osbern Shirley."

"Here, my lord?"

"It may be that I have done you a wrong. Sir Giles de Roffa comes to me"—he looked with some malice at De Roffa—"comes to me in this sorry plight and charges you that you harbour the rogue."

"God forgive him," said Hugh, staring at De Roffa, who cursed his impudence. "By my faith, Sir Giles, I cannot tell why you should say so. I have not seen the man this many a day till I found you fighting him in Romsey mead."

"Ay, that was a fight well fought," Rivers laughed.

"Are you merry, my lord?" De Roffa cried. "This traitor is loose to make strife in the realm. I think my good lord King Edward will not take that blithely. As for your Master Camoys, this is what I have against him. He had the rogue in hiding. He brought him to Romsey to have at the Lady Christine there. When I came upon them and would have made the knave prisoner, he brought him off. Let him answer that."

"Well. Speak, sir, it is your turn."

"Good faith, my lord," says Hugh, smiling, "Sir Giles knows not what he says, he is too soon afoot after his fall. This tale is nought. Osbern Shirley hath not been in any house or land of mine. I do not live secret. What I do all my men must know. Ask where you will. I did not bring him to Romsey. True it is I went there, as my wont is, for my Lady Du Pré buys goods of me, but I went alone and to Romsey I came alone, as they will tell you at the town gate and the abbey gate. Sir

Giles had found this man there before ever I came, for when I rode to the abbey I heard the din of a fight in the mead and found Sir Giles and a man like a mariner on the ground together. My only part in it is that I came to them and delivered Sir Giles and the other broke from me and took his horse and fled; and I tended Sir Giles, for he lay in a swoon, and brought him to the abbey and delivered him to the lay sisters. Thereafter I rode back to Hampton and sought the Admiral here to do business with him. And all this can be proved by many witnesses, my lord; but since it hath been said that I harbour a traitor, I pray you search my house where you will."

"No need of that, Master Camoys. I am well content."

"I pray you, my lord. Do me right. Let your archers make search that Sir Giles may be satisfied and bring no more against me."

"Do not count on that, friend," De Roffa grinned through his bandage. "Nay, you need not search, my lord. He is not here. But here is one knows well where he is." He stalked out.

"I take you to witness, my lord, this is not right reason," Hugh cried.

"By St. George, there is no reason in it," said Rivers. "But some private hate. What has he against you, Master Camoys?"

"Against me, nothing that I know. Against Gubern Shirley something. Against you, my lord, something more."

"Why, what have I to do in it?"

"You are constable of Hampton in his place. If he can catch a traitor that lurked in your bounds, he would be well pleased. If he could tell it against you that you let a traitor go free, his tongue would not be still."

"Ay, that is De Roffa," Rivers laughed. "You know him well."

"I have lived under him long years," Hugh said.

"Fear him no more. He grows old. None marks him now. By my life, I could believe he made up this tale

of Shirley to cover it that he had a beating. Tell me true, could you swear the fellow that fought him was Osbern Shirley ? ”

“ By my faith, I would be slow,” Hugh hesitated. “ The man was dressed like a mariner—yet he had the look—I thought he was the man—but if it were to swear in court—I saw him but a moment as he broke from me.”

And my Lord Rivers drank a cup of wine with them and went away very friendly.

Contarini, who had not yet finished one cup, smelt it, relishing the scent. “ In your heavy way you are neat,” he said. “ Now let me hear the truth.”

“ All is told. Osbern Shirley struck down De Roffa and is gone to sanctuary and must be borne overseas lest De Roffa find him out and destroy him.”

“ What is he to you ? ”

“ He was as a brother to me when I was poor.”

“ Yea, yea,” Contarini nodded. “ Something is said. Yet not all. Three men rode to Romsey and each man rode alone, Osbern Shirley, Giles de Roffa, Hugh Camoys. What is it in Romsey that took them there ? Is she fair, your Lady Christine ? ”

Hugh flushed. “ A noble and gracious lady. Sir, you read this wrong. She abides with the holy nuns.”

“ By St. Mark, if she end a nun it is not for lack of choice. Hugh Camoys, Giles de Roffa, Osbern Shirley,” he laughed. “ Which hath her favour ? ”

“ Sir, this is no gentle jest. She is a lady nobly born and of high honour.”

“ It is the child you plucked from the Portugals. What, lad, she has been in your soul ever since. You worship her for your saint.”

“ And if I do ? ”

“ The more fool are you,” said Contarini. “ Out on you, what a woman wants of a man is not a halo.”

“ Sir, we talk idly. Let us make an end. Will you serve me ? ”

Contarini smiled. "I will wager my silver Venus it is this Osbern Shirley she smiles upon," he said. "And you would have him safe overseas. Tell me true, lad, is that for love of him or love of her?"

Hugh met his mocking eyes. "Sir, I must do what lies before me."

"Hark in your ear. If he come safe to France he may come back again to mar your delights with her. What if he should go to sleep in ten fathoms of sea?"

"God forbid!" Hugh cried. "Sir, you will be true man to him and me?"

"As you will," Contarini shrugged.

"Swear it, swear it by——"

"By my love, child," said Contarini and kissed him. *

Thus was Osbern carried over to France to seek fortune, even as he had boasted, with my lord of Richmond and the other exiles that still hoped to change Kings, and none in Hampton knew the manner of his going. But De Roffa wrote a tale about it to Richard Crookback and had an order to come to London and make good what he charged against the constable. Being thus delivered from the constable's jurisdiction he took himself to court and there stayed in the Crookback's train.

As soon as he was out of the way Hugh went again to Romsey and there found my Lady Du Pré alone. "Sir, I had begun to count the days," she said, and her eyes were gentle. "All is well?"

"Osbern Shirley is landed in France, my lady."

"Fie! I asked of you," she cried.

"It is kind. All is well with me," he smiled. "I take some pains for that, my lady."

"Do you so?" She watched him for a moment of silence.

"Come, sir, tell your news to Christine. She is walking by the stream."

"Still?" Hugh's smile went awry.

"What would you have?" said Christine's mother.

But it was within the abbey precinct, where the clear chalk stream flowed through the orchard, that Christine

walked that morning. "Master Camoys!" she held out both her hands to him. "And what have you to tell?" Whereat her mother drew away.

"Sir Giles de Roffa is ridden to London and Osbern Shirley is landed in France."

"So here is only Master Camoys by my river." She laughed. "By my faith, I hope no enemy will come upon him."

"I have none. The truth is, I could never afford it."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Why, lady, who should be against me? Not you, I pray you."

She considered him calmly. "I have been, you should not forget it. When I have hated you, I told you roundly, Master Hugh."

"And now, Lady Christine?"

"And now I have put off the vanities of this sinful world. Peace be with you, brother. But others have not, I promise you. On guard!"

"God have mercy, who is to fear?"

"Sir Giles whom you saved from Sir Osbern, Sir Osbern whom you saved from Sir Giles. To give a man his life, to rob a man of his vengeance: God mend your wit, sir, what can he do but hate you?"

"Nay, lady, this is to think vilely of men."

She folded her hands on her bosom in the manner of a nun; she cast down her eyes. "Alas, brother; this is to know them."

"Do not believe it. No man hath hated me to my hurt in all my days."

She dropped her hands, she flung back her head, her eyes flashed, she was in no way like a nun. "Out on you, will you still be a saint to me? No man hath hurt you! No, because you never stand out against a man. You are meek and serve all."

"Meek? I do not know," Hugh said. "But for serving, every man must do service, merchant and knight and lord, else is there no good life."

"Never preach to me," she cried. "Why did you help Osbern Shirley away to France?"

"He is my good friend."

"You hang if that is known."

"Will you tell of me, lady?" Hugh smiled.

"He bade me go to France with him." Hugh did not answer. "Well, sirrah, did you know of that?"

"I do not know why you tell me, lady."

She flushed. "Did you send him to send him away from me?"

"I do not think of you so. I do not think so of him."

"Ay, you love him well," she laughed.

"While I live," Hugh said.

"Oh, be patient! He will come again, I answer for him. He will come again. Now say 'God send him.'"

"God send him!" Hugh repeated.

She turned from him and swept into the abbey.

CHAPTER XX

SIR GILES COMES BACK

AFTER these things there was peace. King Edward took no heed of De Roffa's tale and left my Lord Rivers to do as he would in Hampton. He had an easy task and he was an easy master. None came to challenge him, not Osbern Shirley nor any other of the exiles, no French raiders, no pirates. The broken men who still hoped to set up a King of the red rose could not gather strength for a venture. The only King to their hands was Henry of Richmond, who had but little of a title, less of royal blood, who was untried in arms, and a cold, clerkly youth without power over men. France might harbour him but would stake nothing upon a cause that he led. King Edward had taught the world to fear him, and guarded by that fear he reigned secure. His days were spent on feasting and women, but there was peace in the land from Tweed to Channel, and men kept the law and paid their dues and reaped their harvests and plied their crafts and were well content.

Thereby the trade of Hampton grew. The thriving south country had a mind to live handsomely and was hungry for all manner of goods beyond use or any expectation. Though the weavers of Hugh Camoys had trained many a prentice to their Flemish skill, Tom Overey still called for more of their frieze and serge and spent half his days about the weaving sheds, so the work grew upon him, such profit it bore. Prentice and journeyman waxed fat and old men grumbled that they were as proud as their masters. It was a good time for poor folk, there were not

hands enough in Hampton to do all the craftsmen's work that the merchants cried for, and men and boys who were not born to any guild, who had no more right in the town than Eleanor Cannoys' son, were made free of good crafts and prospered.

But the merchants were the busiest men. Not only in England the fear of King Edward's sword made peace. King Louis of France was friendly and to any French port an English ship could go. The old trade with Gascony offered itself. English throats were still thirsty for Gascon wine, the Gascon vintners eager for their English market. And Flanders still wanted wool, and Italy, and there was tin to send overseas and the smiths craved Spanish iron. There were not ships enough in Hampton for all the ventures of promise and it could not serve the honour of Hampton nor her merchants' purses that foreign mariners should carry the new trade. The shipwrights worked merrily, but goods would not wait on them. Hugh cast hungry eyes on the King's ships which De Roffa had built to guard the seas. It offended his conscience that any thing which man could use should do no service. The ships were built for fighting, they must need more men to work them, they must carry less cargo than was fit and right. They would make costly voyages. But the trade must bear it. Win the trade, the gains would come. So he argued with Tom Overey, who stood aghast : and proved to him laboriously first that it was a wild venture which would bring loss, second that it was impossible, for they were King's ships. Never in the memory of man or of Tom Overey had a King's ship been hired to a merchant.

"Rest in peace, brother. I will remember it," Hugh smiled. And he went to my Lord Rivers and in his humble wise asked my lord constable's aid for the merchants of Hampton. In the days of King Harry, Harry of Monmouth, before the French war, the merchants had been, by my lord constable's grace, granted King's ships at hire to carry their goods. Now that the land had peace again, he made bold to ask again that the King's ships should sail for

them, to the King's good profit and the welfare of the realm.

So he persuaded the constable, who liked money as well as other men, and took one ship and another till all were on the high seas.

And then King Edward died. My Lord Rivers made proclamation of his son, the boy of thirteen, whose fate it was to be Edward V, and called mayor and aldermen to the castle. "Look well to your town, my masters, for I must march to London and leave scant guard here."

"God send your lordship soon back in Hampton," said Tom Overey, when he could think of anything to say.

"Amen to that. You are kindly folk. True men you have been to our King that is dead. Be true to his son."

"God save the King," said Tom Overey.

So Rivers marched away with his men while the town wondered, and when they were gone Father Nicholas, coming upon Hugh as he made his way alone and silent through the crowd that lingered to chatter, linked arms with him. "Ho! wise man, what may this mean?"

"A good, kind lord is gone from us."

"Yea, I have eyes. But why is he gone, my wisdom?"

"Surely to serve the King."

"Now look you, this is the very way to make a man fear."

"Fear God, father," Hugh smiled.

"Yea, so I do, and the words of God."

"What troubles you this day?"

"It is written 'Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!'"

"Pray God it is not written for us."

"Watch and pray, child," said Father Nicholas.

And Hugh, though he confessed fear to no man, was not much less afraid. It was plain to him that Rivers, who was the boy king's uncle, brother of the widowed Queen, hurried to London to guard him against his other uncle,

Richard Crookback. Even so in the past the great lords would strive to possess the person and the power of that other weakling king, the half-wit Henry VI.

In a little while came news that Richard was guardian and protector of King and realm and the Queen-mother had taken sanctuary at Westminster. Then they heard that my Lord Rivers was sent a prisoner to a northern castle and another lord, his familiar, was slain and Richard was all in all. Letters from London merchants told that the boy King and his brother were lodged in the Tower and Parliament hot for Richard, and a preacher at Paul's Cross had said there was none left of the true blood royal but he. Not many days more were gone, so swift he worked, before they heard that the cardinal had set the crown upon his head to the good content of all men.

Save for wonder and wagging tongues, all these things made no change in Hampton. Not a craftsman had less work or wage, not a merchant checked his enterprise. If the land lay quiet (and there was no word of strife) their goods were needed still. To the boy King they had no loyalty: his father had left them a memory of blood: it was a man's lifetime since any King had ruled in men's hearts. All they cared for in a King was that he should be one who could keep the peace, and the Crookback was proven strong.

But some hearts stirred when De Roffa came back to Hampton. Short warning they had of that. At noon a vintner rode in from Winchester and told how De Roffa was there with a company of archers. Before dusk De Roffa marched into the castle. That night mayor and aldermen sat late in counsel.

"If he be constable, I will be mayor no more," so Tom Overey began and so he ended, and they could make nothing of him and some of them were of his mind, fearing De Roffa would bear harder on the town if it maintained the man who had withstood him to the King's face. There was no fear in Tom Overey, but sullen hate. He, who never said more than half he thought, said openly the man was a knave and

no master for him, and there would be black days for the town and they must all stand honestly together.

"In good days and in bad, brother," said Hugh, who had come as near being angry with the man as he could. "But by my faith, you have weakened us."

"I will be mayor no more," said Tom sullenly.

Then some said that it was best so, for Sir Giles would surely put Master Overey out of office, even as he had put out Master Aylward, and Tom Overey thanked them bitterly for ranking him with Robin Aylward and lost his temper. "Take it who will": he plucked off his mayor's chain and flung it on the table. "I see ye are all right ready to wear it," and with that he was up and out.

Hugh followed after him, but could not soothe him: he was in the desperate case of believing that what he desired to do was his righteous duty, and argument could only prove to him that he was the one honest man in a world of knaves.

So when De Roffa sent to summon mayor and aldermen to the castle the aldermen must needs arrange a tale that Master Mayor had some time been sick and sought relief of his office.

De Roffa, receiving them with something more of armed men and pomp than his wont was, heard and lifted his level brows. "This is ill fortune. Who is he that you have lost? Master Overey? Why, that was a man of my making and my good friend. Greet him well for me and say that I am sorry for his plight and wish him a good recovery. Who hath done his work since he was sick?"

They had no answer ready for that, but after a moment Hugh said, "Why, my lord, it comes upon us all."

"What, Master Camoys, are you here yet?" De Roffa smiled. "By my sword, I heard that you had grown so great there was no room for you in Hampton."

"My lord, you mock me."

"We have had our jests together, you and I. This shall not be the last, Master Camoys. I thank God you

are not sick too." The aldermen looked at each other with anxious eyes. They did not understand the subtleties of De Roffa, but disliked the flavour and the smile.

But Hugh said meekly, "I am here to serve you, my lord."

"I doubt it not," De Roffa laughed. "Come, my masters, the good town must not be masterless. What man do you present me for your mayor?"

The aldermen were silent. Then one muttered that it had not been thought upon. "We stand before you at your pleasure, my lord," said Hugh.

"Hear me now." De Roffa leaned back in his chair. "You have known me long years, and I think when I was constable of Hampton the town fared not ill. I can give kind rule to them that give true service. You have seen me put down from my governance and there are some among you that fought for their own hand and did me what hurt they might. I am not come seeking vengeance. Our good King Richard is no man of blood like him that is gone. You shall not see man's flesh rotting on Hampton walls for what is past, but be you well assured none will trouble King Richard's peace. He will not give himself to lusts and let men wax strong against him. His rule is sure. For him I keep watch on the southern shore, and you know my eyes are keen. If you be loyal in Hampton you shall thrive, for we are come to years of peace and I will maintain all your rights by land and sea. But I give you warning, he that is not with me is against me and I will not spare him. I have said. And now, my masters, what man shall be mayor of Hampton?"

Again the aldermen could not tell what to answer till one said, "My lord, we be all the King's men."

"By my sword," De Roffa laughed, "you are not quick to serve him. What, must I choose for you? Then I name Master Hugh Canoyes there. What say you?"

There was indeed no ambition for the office, such fear De Roffa had planted in them. After a moment of amazement, for they had all thought Hugh the very man who had

drawn the threats, they made haste to vow there was none better in Hampton.

"And how says he?" De Roffa smiled.

"My lord, this was not sought of me, I take you to witness," Hugh said, "and this was not what I looked for when I came. I cannot tell why you would do me honour." So he talked, winning time to think while his grave eyes watched De Roffa, and he made a bluff end: "I humbly thank your lordship; I will do my endeavour."

"Give you joy, Master Mayor," said De Roffa and gave them wine and sent them away.

Back in the guild hall they were all very warm and friendly to Hugh, as well became men who saw another take the duty from which they shrank. He did not doubt of their good will. No man's son though he was, he had so borne himself that for many a year envy had not stirred against him. He stood beyond cavil the richest and most potent merchant in Hampton. His right to be mayor none could challenge. But he took care that he should be first with the news to Tom Overey.

By that he gained nothing. Tom Overey, a dull honest man in a passion of rectitude, was beyond reason. Since his temper forbade him to work with De Roffa, he held it the duty of all men to refuse. That his own familiar friend, who had risen out of nothing by favour of him and his dead mother, should take the office he renounced, seemed to him a monstrous treachery. He said so bluntly and would by no means be persuaded otherwise. The arts of persuasion, and Hugh had skill therein, only convinced him of the wicked purposes of his supplanter. "Go your ways, Judas. You have grown rich by my house and now cast me down. You would grow great by delivering the town to serve this false knave and his hunchback master. Look to yourself. You shall not do it. By Romsey rood, you shall not. I promise you there be honest men enough in Hampton to stand against you."

"God show you the right, brother," said Hugh sadly. "No man of Hampton is hurt by me," and he went out to

the din of Tom Overey renouncing all fellowship with him.

He was wounded. The day had gone by when the friendship of the house of Overey had value for him. Their affairs and his were mingled, but he governed the common ventures, he could do without their money or favour, he would indeed be the richer man by the end of that alliance. In the business of the town Mayor Overey, all men knew, had been only a mouthpiece for Master Camoys, and could carry against him but a few old families. What Tom Overey could do, was not to be feared, but what he thought made a lingering pain. Hugh coveted good esteem of his friends like a child.

Nevertheless he allowed himself no doubts, no repentance. Whatever De Roffa had in his head, the town would need a wise man to match him. That was well proved of old. Hugh was very sure who the man should be. A thousand pities Tom Overey had not held his place and let Hugh stand at his ear as in the old days. But that was no argument for refusing to work with De Roffa: to meet him so, to bid him bring in a mayor of his own—plain madness! That he was willing to begin again with the man who had withstood him and beaten him might be a trap, might yet be honest policy. Hugh felt neither malice nor kindness for him, judged him well content to deal fairly with the town so long as it served him, ready for any wickedness if he had need, but not apt to wanton tyranny, not capable of the misrule of folly. It was something in a world where good men had the wits of Tom Overey! Impossible to make Tom Overey understand that it might serve men better to do business with the devil than defy him.

The devil came to call upon Mayor Camoys alone and by night. "Ha! my merchant, you look warily," he smiled, as a chair was set for him in the inner room.

"I think of old times, my lord."

"You are a bold fellow to remind me. The last time I was here you made a mock of me to my Lord Rivers." He laughed. "The wheel goes round, friend. Tell me true, where did you hide Shirley that night?"

"I told you the truth then, my lord. He was not here nor in any place of mine. I have not seen him since that day at Romsey nor heard any word of him."

"You would say the same if you had. I know you. Hear me, friend: the past is past and I hold nothing against you, but if you see him again I am to know it presently or your head is loosened."

"If you know me, my lord, you know I do not risk my head."

"Yea. That I count upon."

"And by your favour, it was not of that night I thought when I saw you in my poor house alone, but of older years when you came to me in the dusk."

De Roffa smiled. "Stealthily and for a secret charge, to make strife in Hampton. I remember. And what is the secret now? saith Master Camoys, who is grown rich and great and wants no more strife."

"You have said." Hugh bowed.

"For this I am come, to learn your mind. I know well that it is you who lead the town and you have no love for me nor loyalty. I warrant you, you have worked your wit to guess why I named you mayor. Here is your answer. I would rather have you with me than against me. Now be as frank with me. Why do you take the place?"

"To keep the town at peace, my lord."

De Roffa held out his hand. "For that I am here. Mark you, friend, my lord Richard is the strongest man that I have known in my days and the wisest, and I have known all that sought to be great. He will bring the land to right good order. He counts to find in you merchants the strength of his realm, and his purpose is to show you kind favour in all your trading. But you must serve him loyally and look to none other. There is a rabble of knaves in France who make bold to plot against him and will venture, if they can find fools here to succour them. Therefore am I here to watch the southern shore. How say you: are you head and heart for King Richard?"

"I will serve him faithfully. Peace is our need."

"Well said. Now hark you, are there any here who are bound to my Lord Rivers?"

"He was a good and kindly lord to us."

"He was a traitor to King Richard and is judged and dead."

"God rest him," said Hugh, and crossed himself and met De Roffa's keen eyes.

"They do not live long who play with treason now," said De Roffa. "Fare you well, my merchant."

CHAPTER XXI

SIR GILES MARCHES OUT

THIS prelude of threats did not change Hugh's mind. He found in it confirmation of his resolve to work with De Roffa. For the threats availed only to persuade him that De Roffa was not too sure of King Richard's power, and if they were to change kings again the more need of a cool, shrewd head to guide Hampton.

In De Roffa appeared no sign of treachery. He was as good as his word, he chose to forget the old quarrels. Hugh found him once again an easy master. He required his dues and the King's dues, but he was not greedy. He was something more officious about the number of archers and mariners the town could furnish at need. He was particular to know what had become of the King's ships which Hugh had chartered, but discovering that good sums were already to hand for their hire, and more would come, he was pleased to approve the plan. For the rest, he did not meddle. The mayor might order town and quay as he chose, and in and out merchandise and ship and man went free. If there was a stronger garrison in the castle, if archers and men-at-arms were often out at exercise on the common, De Roffa kept them under firm discipline and the town had no harm from any man of his.

Nothing was changed in Hampton, craftsman and merchant were busy and prosperous as before De Roffa came. Yet there was murmuring. The strong force in the castle, the show of arms did not please. When it was known that Rivers had gone to the scaffold, men began to ask what

ailed King Richard that he must slay so kind a lord. A little after came the news that the boy King of a day had died in the Tower and his brother too, and women cried for the children and taught their men to take it ill. Queer rumours ran whispered through the town, and some folk began to say openly Master Overey was right and Tom Overey and his kin went about with solemn forebodings of evil.

What Hampton folk could do to avert it none pretended to know, but Hugh felt men's minds turning against him. It was new and it hurt, but he held on his way. When he had to say anything of the children's death, he spoke as if it were sure they had died, as King Richard gave out, in the way of nature. He did not believe it, but he saw very clearly that nothing he or Hampton might have done would have saved them, nothing was to do which could avenge them, his work was to hold the town quiet at its work till a better day.

"Oh, wise man," said Father Nicholas, "good friends have you sought and found. For the children of wrath are with power."

"Do I make friends, father?" Hugh smiled. "I promise you I do not count on them. While I serve them, they uphold me. When they need me no more I shall pass and go. What have I to gain by them? I am mayor of Hampton that Hampton folk may learn to hate me. By my faith, I see it well."

"Yea, child. King Herod you serve. What wages shall you have from Christian men? Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Herod, he died eaten of worms. I cannot tell what befell his ministers. I fear me you shall live to show me. This King shall not long endure."

"It may be," said Hugh wearily.

"What waits you then?"

"You shall deliver me to the next King and say this man served him that slew the children, while all we good Hampton folk cursed him."

"By Romsey rood, men will say so," Father Nicholas

cried. "Think upon it, child, for your poor soul's salvation."

"Yea, father, I think upon it. And here am I mayor of Hampton yet."

"Now God help you, you are blind in the pride of your cunning!" the friar turned from him.

"By my faith, not I," Hugh smiled.

While they talked De Roffa was marching out of the castle and left but a small garrison behind. For news had come that the Duke of Buckingham was in arms against the King with a great power and raising all the west. When next the court of aldermen met Tom Overey was there, the first time for many days, and made much ado to know what orders De Roffa had given to the town, and would not be content with the answer that the townsfolk must keep watch night and day and be ready to arm and man the wall. "What is this?" said Tom Overey. "We are to hold the town for De Roffa against whoever comes? Good St. Denis! We are not his vassals."

"Here is nothing new, brother," Hugh made answer. "So it hath ever been done when the constable went out to battle. So it was when you were mayor and De Roffa our lord."

"I was not bound to him nor cause of his, as well you know," Tom Overey growled. "Mark you now, my masters, this is to make us serve De Roffa and his King."

"What would you have us do, brother?" said Hugh.

"You may do so who find your profit in it. I say this is no cause for honest men. What shall become of us if Richard Crookback goes down and Hampton town be taken fighting for him?"

"I pray you, what would you do?" Hugh said mildly. "Shall we proclaim some King of our own in Hampton? Shall we leave the town open for any that comes to seize upon it?"

Tom Overey broke out again, but it was so plain there was no answer that most of the aldermen made haste to silence him, yet gently, with fair words. And though

Hugh had his way, he knew very well that Tom Overey was gaining upon him.

But for the time it mattered nothing. King Richard conquered swiftly and easily and His Grace of Buckingham paid the price and De Roffa came marching back with banners and trumpets and the aldermen thanked God and St. Denis that Hugh Camoys had a head and they had kept theirs.

Hugh felt little joy in that. For on the morrow of his triumph De Roffa rode out to Romsey. My Lady Du Pré received him with formal courtesy alone.

"Give me grace that I have not waited upon you before," he smiled.

"Sir, I have no claim upon you that you should come now."

"You are too proud to claim what I am proud to render. I pray you, is there any service I can do?"

"I thank you, I thank you,"

"None troubles your land or your folk at Marwell?"

"Sir, my men are loyal."

"They should be so who serve you. I hoped to find you in your own house again."

"Here we rest safe, sir."

"And there too, I promise you. This peace is sure, lady."

"Ay? Is there peace?" she said.

"We have come to the end," he smiled. "I hang up my sword. For this only I waited to pray you honour me in Hampton."

"You are kind. I shall not see Hampton again."

"Do not say so. You have a life to live yet."

"My life was lived long ago, sir. Here is rest."

"You will live again in your daughter," he smiled.

"The Lady Christine is not done with life."

She looked at him with cold surprise. "We thank you, sir."

"What, she is not for a nunnery?" he laughed.

"I find no jest in that, sir."

"Give me grace. I speak a man's thoughts, but in word and thought have nothing but honour for the Lady Christine. I have waited long who might have made bold, and ever she had my worship. Now I am well established in a realm at peace and hold the King's favour, I can ensure her noble fortune as her desert is. So am I come to pray your leave to woo her." He stopped and no answer came. He watched her keenly. "How say you, my lady? Speak me fair."

"Sir, I cannot speak for wonder. She is a child and you—you fought against her father."

"She hath been a woman many a day. I did her father no hurt nor wrong. And for my years," he laughed, "I will set lance in rest against any man. I am no grey-beard."

"You fought against her father when he was slain."

"God have mercy, lady, that mars no marriage, or never a knight could find a maid to wed. So the world has gone in our day, that each has fought against each."

"God forbid that my lord's daughter should wed a man of Richard Crookback's," she cried.

De Roffa flushed and frowned and bit back a word and went on quickly, "Why, what harm had your lord of King Richard? None, nor of me none. I was Warwick's man in his day and he was King Henry's, and Warwick and King Henry lie dead and their quarrels are gone and their loyalties. There is but one King now and one cause. Lady Christine must wed a man of King Richard's or she will wed none."

"Sir, do you threaten us?"

"Here are no threats. I speak what is. Answer to that, I pray you."

"I have said. She shall not go to any man of Richard Crookback."

"You have said. And what says she?"

My lady started up and went to an inner door and called and Christine came. She stood taller than her mother, fair and calm; she took a hand of her mother's between

both of hers and surveyed De Roffa. "You have some errand to me, sir?"

He bowed. "For you I have come, lady. I pray you hear me alone."

"Sir, I have no secrets."

"And I have that to say which can be said to none but you."

"I cry your mercy. It must go unsaid."

"What do you fear?" he smiled.

"There is no fear in me."

"I have come to ask leave to woo you."

She made him a curtsy. "I thank you, sir. It is too high an honour for me."

"Lady, you are quick to answer what I have thought upon long years since you were a child."

"Ay, that is long indeed," she smiled. "Sir, think upon it no more."

"You are answered, sir," her mother said quickly. "Go your way."

"You bid me go, Lady Christine?"

"With all my heart, sir."

"You shall give me a reason first. Your mother there would not have you wed King Richard's man."

"Sir, I am of her mind."

"Because I am King Richard's man or because I am Giles de Roffa?"

"Because you are what you are and I am what I am. Sir, are you answered now?"

"You live in a dream, lady. Because you are what you are, you may not live your life a maid."

"By mine honour, strange stuff to hear in a nunnery! Sir, you should go tell the lady abbess this."

"What, you have a mind to be a nun?" De Roffa laughed. "Nay, lady, you are not for the veil. I promise you our good King Richard will not suffer that. You are the last of your house. Christine du Pré must be wed."

"For her lands? Oh, sir, you have a dainty way of wooing."

"You will have it so," De Roffa smiled. "I came to ask who have power to take. I would give you all honour. I will make you the greatest lady of the south country, so I stand with King Richard. But if you think to keep yourself for another man, you shall be roughly wooed and won."

"I will hear no more," my lady cried. "Go your way, sir. We are in God's house and His arm is strong." She swept her daughter away.

De Roffa took a stride after them and stopped. He was alone but for his squire at the gate. He could not carry the girl off then, had never meant to press them so hard; their contempt had made a fool of him. As he stood alone, he knew it. He should have played with them, not sounded alarm. To march upon the abbey and break in and carry the girl off would be plain madness. The thing could be done easily, had been done and with good fortune. But Giles de Roffa dared not risk it. The King would not thank him for making a gross quarrel with the Church. The King who wanted of all things peace and good repute could not uphold him. He must bide his time and snatch the girl some day when she went out in the meadow as the rogue Shirley found her. It might be long enough before she ventured. The old shrew, her mother, would watch her close. What a fool was he to give them warning! But the girl would not endure to be mewed up for ever. She had hot blood in her, she was no maid by nature. Ay, there would be brave sport with her.

So he tried to comfort himself as he rode back to Hampton, and yet rode in gloomy and anxious.

CHAPTER XXII

THE KING'S SHIPS

HUGH was summoned to the castle that night and went hastily, knowing where De Roffa had been. The first sight of the lean face told him that De Roffa had found no comfort at Romsey. He humbly gave his lordship joy. "Of what, sirrah?" De Roffa snapped. "Why, of the King's victory." Hugh's eyes opened in mild surprise. "I hope your lordship had no hurt nor loss."

"You are something slow, friend. I looked to find mayor and aldermen at the gate and all the town out to welcome me."

"Why, my lord, we had no news of you. You are so swift, we could not bid you God-speed before you were gone, nor meet you before you are home again."

"Let it be. It was nought. A fool and his folly. He was struck down as soon as he rose. So will it be with any that troubles King Richard's peace. None but a fool would venture."

"God give us peace," Hugh murmured.

"How have you fared in Hampton, friend?"

"We have kept good watch and ward, as your order was, but none threatened us."

"Has any man landed here from France?"

"Why, my lord, we have had a wine-ship in from Gascony."

"Ay, and who came out of her?" De Roffa frowned.

"Only French mariners, my lord. Why, what do you fear?"

"I fear nothing, sirrah. I have heard that which makes me think your Osbern Shirley is here again."

"Not in Hampton, by my faith."

"So you said of old."

"And said truth. My lord, I keep faith with you. He hath not been on Hampton quays or I must have known it. None has heard of him nor thought of him. No Englishman has landed here from France this long while. I pray you, why should you think of him now?"

"I have many eyes and many ears, Master Camoys."

"If you doubt me, how shall I serve you? So please you, my lord, let another have my office. I did not seek it."

"Let be, man. I have nothing against you. But there be rogues at work. Watch every ship that comes from France narrowly and every ship that sails for France."

"To seek Osbern Shirley, my lord?"

"Ay, or any who may do his errands to his friends here. There be many hungry rogues lurking in France with Henry of Richmond. And now we talk of ships: where be these ships of the King that you have hired? I must have them home again." They fell to talk of that and sat long, Hugh showing cause why the ships could not be brought back till the time appointed, and how much the King gained by their hire, and pleading that they should be chartered again to him, De Roffa insistent to have them back at his command presently and refusing them to any other offer of hire because the King must have ships to watch the Channel. But when Hugh cried out at that to ask if there was any fear of war at sea De Roffa put him down, swearing that no war was near or would come, so King Richard was feared; yet the Constable of Hampton had need of ships, as of archers for maintenance of the King's power. And with a strait order to deliver up the ships swiftly Hugh was sent home.

He had matter enough to think of. The fear of Osbern he swiftly decided was born of the journey to Romsey, Hugh never doubted that De Roffa had marked down

Christine for his from the day her father was killed. But that she lived in the abbey he would have seized her long ago. He had not felt strong enough in the old days to dare a quarrel with the Church, but now that he was high in the favour of a King who feared not God neither regarded man, abbey walls might not hold the lady safe. He had surely gone there in the flush of his triumph to demand her. He would be denied. Neither she nor her mother was of a temper to parley with him. Something must have been said which made him think that she looked to Osbern. Grimly Hugh bade himself remember she was likely enough to avow Osbern her man. Osbern—he had everything to win a woman, except good fortune—and to the Lady Christine misfortune would commend him. And if De Roffa pressed her she would be passionately for Osbern. And De Roffa would be more inclined to do her violence. And if De Roffa chose to ravish her, who could stay him? The townsfolk might murmur against him and his King, but they would not take arms, nay, if they dared it they must be overthrown, such strength he had in the castle.

But why should he so fear Osbern? If Osbern had come, which Hugh did not a moment believe, he must lurk in hiding. He might win to Romsey, have speech of the lady, confirm her love for him; he could not deliver her. And yet De Roffa was afraid.

This matter of the ships too. It could not be anything he had heard at Romsey which made De Roffa want the King's ships back in Hampton water. He needed no fleet against Osbern Shirley. Here was some other fear at work. The Constable of Hampton must have ships in the Channel, quoth he. And why? No constable had manned a ship for many a year, but if those exiles in France were not such a rabble as De Roffa boasted, nor Henry of Richmond such a weakling, then King Richard might well want a fleet to watch the southern coast. The Crookback had already had one rebellion to fight. What if another came with good help from overseas?

Why then, another difficult game to play for the Mayor

of Hampton Town. Hugh wanted war no more than of old, yet war might be better than the rule of this murderous King and De Roffa working his will. But it would not serve to bring Hampton men into a war of princes on the losing side. If the Crookback triumphed and they had denied him help at need, he would have vengeance. If they furnished him ships and mariners and Richmond conquered, they would pay dear. It was the old trial of a man's wit with darker dangers. And a trial more difficult. In the old days all the town stood together. Now he had enemies. Whatever he did Tom Overey and his kin would find fault. However it went, Tom Overey would make occasion to go against him. Hugh was a lonely man as he laid down his weary head that night.

He could not hold the ships in their foreign ports. At their appointed time they would come homeward. Some might be stayed, if he went about it cunningly, before they made Hampton, and sent into other havens. The rest must come in. Meanwhile, he would seek to learn what was afoot in France. He had mariners enough he could trust at need. It should go hard but he could gather better news than De Roffa.

But the Lady Christine—what could a man do for her? It was that dread kept him wakeful till the dawn, and with the dawn he took horse and rode to Romsey.

He did not reach the abbey. Upon the way he found a party of De Roffa's men-at-arms who knew him well enough and offered him no hindrance, but from them he learnt that the constable had other horsemen out watching the roads round Romsey. So he was quick to tell them that he was going to Bishopstoke and in fact went on to Winchester. He had an old friendship with the prior of the Benedictines there and found him very ready to hear of some silver ware new come from Milan, and while they talked of it Hugh let fall that Romsey Nunnery was being watched by men-at-arms. The good prior cried out in horror, asked fervently what villainy was intended and who commanded it. Hugh could not tell, made it no matter of his, but if the prior

doubted of it, bade him send and see, which the good man vowed he would do, and swiftly, and the bishop should hear of it, and since he could no more be brought to apply his mind to silver ware, Hugh left him and rode back to Hampton not ill-content.

The Bishop of Winchester was much afflicted with the trials of Romsey Abbey that week. Not only his prior but the abbess was urgent with him to vindicate holy Church. For my Lady du Pré had no mind to endure the threats of De Roffa patiently, but carried them to the abbess, and she, much offended thereby, was met in the morning with news that men-at-arms were set on every road to her gate. So she presently dispatched her chaplain with a letter written in words of flame to my lord bishop. Not so fiercely the bishop, who had held the See of Winchester for many a troubled year, wrote to King Richard, but it was made clear to that shrewd head De Roffa had come near to rouse the Church against him. Swift orders went to Hampton bidding the constable keep his hands off nuns and nunneries till a quieter time.

In that De Roffa never suspected the work of Hugh Camoys. But his chagrin, his desire to commend himself to the King, made him press more sternly to have the King's ships back. He was capable, even in bad temper, of feeling the weight of a fact. That no power could bring back ships from Italy, from Spain, before their appointed time he allowed, but demanded exact accounts of each ship's orders. Hugh was the more persuaded of his fears, and soon had news from France that Henry of Richmond was gathering a power in Brittany, not only English exiles but soldiers of fortune, hired, so men whispered, with money from the French King. Hugh resolved to keep the ships out of De Roffa's hands as long as he might. Send out small craft to meet them and turn them away from Hampton he dared not. De Roffa had learnt too much about them, but when they were in Hampton something must be contrived.

De Roffa was plainly making ready for war. The

garrison in the castle grew and grew. All the money he received for the hire of the ships he was spending to gather men from the countryside to bear arms. The town murmured at it, afraid of so great a force, and Tom Overey and his friends went about saying openly the mayor betrayed them to make ships traffic for the constable's profit and furnish him an army against the liberties of Hampton.

The ships began to come in. De Roffa commanded that they should be hastily unloaded and their crews make ready for sea again with archers and men-at-arms aboard. "Be it so, my lord," said Hugh meekly. "Shall I take order with the shipwrights for it, or will you?"

"Shipwrights, sirrah?" De Roffa stared. "No need of shipwrights. Go to, send me their captains."

The captains had learnt to trust in Hugh's plans for them. They had word from him that the constable thought to use the ships for war. As one man they swore that the ships could not take the sea again and no mariner would dare sail in them till they had been in the shipwrights' hands.

De Roffa stormed in vain. No man could drive mariners nor work a ship without them. For all he could tell, no landsman being a judge of the mariners' mystery, the captains were in the right. To the shipwrights' yards the ships went and the shipwrights seeing their profit in it took a hint and discovered vast work to do upon them. So all the King's ships lay in Hampton haven, but high and dry and dismantled.

That summer Hugh had more bitterness against him than in all his life before. De Roffa raged and threatened him because the ships were held in the yards. Tom Overey and his party put it about that Mayor Camoys was making ready a fleet to take Hampton men fighting the Crookback's quarrels. One and all Hugh answered with soft words and silence and took care that his own ships and every other ship that he could order should be out of the Hampton water.

Each week De Roffa was more urgent that the work should be finished. But the shipwrights having been assured in the beginning that Mayor Camoys should pay for all would not make an end. Horsemen came and went between the castle and London and at last De Roffa summoned mayor and aldermen. Hugh had marked his old politic craft falling from him long before. It was gone altogether. He met them with a scowl and a curt demand. He must have ships for the King's service. What man had ships? "Good faith, my lord, I have none," Hugh sighed, and each man who could say the same was quick with his answer. The others made play with excuses and had good reason. The ships of Hampton had been so handled that none but small craft lay in the river. De Roffa commanded the best of them, hoys of some twenty tons, to be made ready for sea. The unhappy owners vowed those could do no service and asked what service they were to do. "Content you. I will set men of mine on board to see they do it," said De Roffa. "They sail this day. Get you gone"; and he drove them forth still protesting.

Some of those frightened aldermen did their best, but the Hampton mariners had no mind to go to sea on an unknown venture under the orders of De Roffa's men-at-arms. When dusk fell the crews had not been found.

De Roffa marched to the guildhall with a guard, and found there only Hugh Camoys. "You make bold to mock me, sirrah."

"Not I, my lord, by my faith. I would have served you if I could."

"You have set yourself up to thwart me."

"Alas, my lord, in the town they say I have sold myself to serve you."

"Do they say so?" De Roffa laughed. "Go, tell them that these ships shall be manned in the morning or at noon I hang the man that owns each ship."

"God have mercy! This shall not profit you, my lord."

"Well. There is still Master Mayor," De Roffa grinned. "Look to it, friend."

But while he spoke the stones were clashing to a horse's hoofs. His squire led in a man covered with dust and foam who plucked at his pouch and brought out a letter. De Roffa took it to the window and turned his back. Hugh heard a deep-drawn breath. He turned again, the letter crushed in his hand, and his face was white.

"God's wounds, I will deal with you as you deal with me," he said and strode out.

When morning came he was gone and all his men.

CHAPTER XXIII

MY LADY GOES TO PRAYERS

HUGH had no doubt what called him in such haste. It was plain that Richmond had sailed and come safe across the sea and King Richard saw the menace dangerous.

Hugh heard a Mass and prayed God save the land and Hampton Town and all men of goodwill. The next need was to discover if the Lady Christine were safe. In his haste De Rossa might have made time to snatch at her. It was a good moment. If the King conquered, there would be no punishment for what De Rossa did hurrying to his aid. If the King went down De Rossa would be in no worse plight for a trifle of sacrilege. If he could break away with an heiress in hand he might make a good bid for life.

Hugh rode fast to Romsey with fear in his heart. But he was still two miles away and more, he was on Baddeley Common, when he saw a slim grey thing on a grey palfrey break away from two men that rode with her and speed towards him over the heather. She reined up across his horse's nose, where she stopped and laughed at him, pink as a wild rose, and cried a hunting-call.

"God have mercy, lady!" was all he found to say.

"God give you grace, sir," says she demurely.

"I pray you, lady, is all well?"

"Oh, sir, do I look so ill?"

That startled him again. It was a moment before he said solemnly as a man might say the creed "I have never seen you so fair."

"Ha!" she gave a little sigh. "That came hardly out of him. Be patient and of a good courage, my master, and you may find me fairer yet."

"There is no lady so fair as you."

"Sir, you have taken long to discover it. Fair quotha!" she laughed. "I have had little chance to be sunburnt."

"I know it well." He sighed and fell again upon solemnity.

"'And plague upon it, who let you out now?' quoth the Mayor of Hampton."

"It is like the glory of God to see you free," Hugh said.

A little murmur of laughter came from her. "By mine honour, I would laugh at that if I could," she said, and her eyes glistened. "You are a good heart."

"But I pray you, is it safe to ride out afield? Does my lady abbess know of it?"

"Look how they watch over me." She pointed to the two horsemen halted out of earshot, gazing every way over the heath. "They are foresters of the abbey. Why, have you not heard, sir? Sir Giles has marched away with all his power. He passed through Winchester in the dawn. So are we delivered."

"God grant it."

"They say there is some great peril come upon Richard Crookback. The abbess believes that Henry of Richmond is come against him."

"I think it may be so. But I pray you, never trust yourself far from the abbey."

"What, must I be mew'd up there still? I thank you, you are not to rule me."

"Not I, lady," Hugh smiled. "But I would have you safe. If De Roffa comes again——"

"Safe! Ay, that is noble! What is it to you that I spend all my days stifled among the nuns? I am safe!"

"I would give my life to deliver you. Believe that, Lady Christine."

"You have never said it till now."

"I have done as I could."

"Ah, Hugh!" Her bosom rose. She touched him timidly. "I know it well."

He bent and kissed her hand.

"Be patient and of a good courage," she smiled with tears in her eyes.

"So it is, there is no other help."

"You come sadly to it, my master," the girl said.

"Go, keep you safe."

"So please you, that is your work."

"God help me, God help me," Hugh groaned. "If the Crookback triumphs and sends De Roffa back to us there is no safety for you nor me."

"Then will you come and take me?" she cried. He grasped at her arm, she swayed and set her horse going and sped away laughing as she went.

A man in a dream rode back to Hampton. To worship Christine had been part of his life ever since he thought as a man. That she should give him a wife's love had never been possible in waking thought. With the memory of her gentle eyes to bear witness, her challenging cry in his ears, he was conjured out of his real world. Christine to declare she was his, to dwell in his house, to lie by his side—the visions mocked him. "Then will you come and take me!" Ay, then, when all was lost, when he had nothing to give her but danger, when they must fly the country and seek friendless fortune. He dared not bid her to that. He could not fail her. What was to do? Nothing was real, nothing was sure. De Roffa might never come again, the Crookback go down, Henry of Richmond be King. Then—why then the Lady du Pré would have high honour and Christine be sought by lords of noble birth and power. And Hugh Camoys, where would he stand if a new King reigned? There were men enough in Hampton to swear that he had sold the town to King Richard's man and maintained the Crookback's wickedness. What place for De Roffa's mayor under

Henry of Richmond? So the venture had gone, he was like to lose however it ended. Well for him, if he came off with life.

For awhile he played with the thought of flight. If he bade Christine, she would leave all to be with him, whatever he could give. He had money to hand which would serve them some while at the worst. He could find a ship to carry them to France. In Flanders there were men who might serve him for the sake of old service. In Venice—if he could find Contarini, he might make a new life. Ay, a noble thing, to bid his lady lose all else that one who fled a broken man should enjoy her while he went begging for home and bread. Yet he was still fighting temptation while he came into Hampton and found men saying that Master Overey had it the Crookback was sped and the town should proclaim King Harry and seize the castle. That decided him.

Not by fault of his should Hampton folk suffer the vengeance of war. His honour was to save the town. He had so contrived it that whichever King should reign Hampton folk must be held innocent of offence. It was not to be endured that they should run upon danger at the last hour. Tom Overey might well be right and Richmond already the victor, yet it would gain nothing to declare for him, and if the Crookback should conquer yet they would have delivered themselves to slaughter and pillage. He saw very well that if Richmond won the realm to withstand Tom Overey would make one more count against him. So let it be. Whoever came to Hampton in triumph Hugh Camoys would be made guilty of disloyalty. It was expedient that one man should die for the people.

He met his aldermen. He found Tom Overey with power against him. His own friends were diminished and feeble and faint of heart. He had a long struggle and hard but the argument of fear carried it and they were agreed to do nothing but abide the issue of the war.

"You have won at last, Master Mayor," said an old alderman wearily.

"Ay, Master Mayor," Tom Overey growled, "for the last time."

So Hampton waited in a fog of rumours till there came to Hugh the Romsey carrier with this letter:

"Sir Giles has come again. Come now."

The man could tell nothing but that there was a mort of folk about the abbey and a lay sister had given him the writing.

Hugh saddled his best horse and rode hard. The Romsey folk were out in the street as though it were market day. He broke through the chattering groups and came to the abbey gate and found there jaded horses and men upon the ground as it were a bivouac. But the men were few and in sorry plight and the abbey foresters stood on guard at the gate.

To them Hugh declared himself and after awhile was passed into the guest house. Christine met him with her mother. "I kiss your hands, my lord," she smiled. "Look how blithe he comes to my call." And indeed Hugh was solemn enough. "I have kept faith, sir. Sir Giles is here."

"Where, in God's name?"

"He lies at the gate, a stricken man."

"God have mercy, he has lost all and comes here!"

"Such is the heart of man, Master Camoys."

"And he lies there upon the ground."

"Such is the heart of woman, Master Camoys." ^P

Her mother cried out. "Peace, child, peace. They have fought their fight, sir, and the Crookback is slain. It was far away in the Midland. Sir Giles was wounded and some few of his men bore him off. They have been hunted night and day as they tell. He bade them bring him here and seek sanctuary with us. Such a man is he."

"And the gate is closed against him," Hugh said.

"Yes, sir, such women are we," said Christine.

"Why, what would you have?" her mother cried.

"Here is no place for him. My lady abbess dare not shelter him. It is against the rule of her Order."

"So let him die at the gate of God's house," said Christine.

"By my faith, they are mad to rest here," Hugh said.

"There is no more strength in them," said Christine. "They count upon our compassion, wretched knaves that they are."

"By the rood, it must not be!" Hugh cried and strode out.

"What is it to him?" said my lady.

Christine drew away from her. "What is it to him!" she said softly. She ran to the door and called. "Hugh! I am here," she called. "Remember me also."

He looked back and went his way.

Among weary men De Roffa lay with a bloody bandage about his head. He wore no mail. His right arm was bound to his side and his doublet a mire of dust and blood. But his eyes were open. He knew the man who bent over him. "You have won, my merchant," he said. "The devil waits for me."

"God forbid, my lord."

De Roffa laughed. "Ay, you could ever serve two masters. I have no skill in it."

If God there be
Let Him come to me
On the gallows tree.

I thought to see you make your end. Look upon me."

"By my faith, all is not done yet. You must make for sanctuary, my lord. Up, up!" He raised the man who swayed in his arms.

"What have you for me?"

"You must make for Beaulieu."

"Twenty miles in the saddle!" De Roffa groaned.

"Not the half of it. I will find you a boat at the head of the water. Mount, my lord, mount and ride."

"You mean good faith?" De Roffa stared at him.

"Why am I here?"

"God knows," De Roffa laughed and shouted, "To horse, knaves, to horse. We will make good yet."

The ring of an order brought them to their feet, the habit of blind obedience, the stir of hope set them going again, and the weary company clattered through Romsey while the townsfolk fled to their houses. By the track through the river meadows Hugh led them to Eling and bade them halt before the village. There was a miller who held from the Abbey of Beaulieu and had barges of the abbey and his own to carry grain. Something in hand persuaded him that it was nothing to him if some fellows, whose horses were weary and who were to be guests of the abbey, took an abbey barge; he need not see them; he would not see them; and if there were some strange horses grazing in his meadow, why a man must take things as they came.

So, none hindering them, they let their horses loose and scrambled aboard a barge and the stream bore them slowly away. Hugh stood watching them, as a black sail rose and stiffened to the breeze, saw De Roffa wave his hand and turn to the westering sun.

The miller nudged him. "I never knew un, not I," the miller said and winked. "But you best begone, master." He chuckled. "I do vow he is not for Beaulieu. But what is that to you or me? We never saw un. Go your ways, master."

Hugh grasped the dusty hand and went. He was nñch of the miller's mind. Aboard a sound craft, De Roffa would think of a better fate than sanctuary. The barges were seaworthy in fair weather. If his men could work her she might make France, he might get aboard some foreigner and escape so. Let him do as he would, he could be safe. What of Hugh Camoys who remained to pay the price?

He rode back to Romsey. Whatever was to come, he would have his hour with Christine. That he had earned; that was his right. He came to the abbey with his horse in a foam.

My lady sat with her daughter ; my lady looked at him with cold eyes.

"You are come again, sir ? "

"Madame, he was bidden," Christine cried.

"What have you done with that man ? "

"He has gone his way, my lady. He will trouble you no more."

"Where is he ? "

"By my faith, I cannot tell."

"Your faith ! " she said. "You have delivered him from justice. I pray you, do you come to me to boast of it ? "

"Boast ! " Christine laughed. "Oh, well said, mother. Always he is boasting. It is his nature." She started up, eyes flashing, face aglow. "He is not come to you. He is come to me and because I bid him. Hugh ! Hugh ! " She cast herself upon him and clung to him. "Ah, my dear, be true to me now."

"I am all yours," Hugh said.

"And I for you, my dear, my very dear."

My lady rose. "Sir, if there is no shame in her, methinks there should be some in you."

"None, none," Christine cried.

"Here is no shame," Hugh said. "But all honour and worship."

"What are you to say so ? "

"You have known me long, lady, and found no ill faith in me."

"Oh, you are a good trusty merchant. You serve all faithfully. Me, De Roffa, whoever it profits you."

"This is shame," Christine cried, "this is shame indeed. She is my mother who speaks ! Come, sir, come, I will hear no more of her." She drew him to the door.

"Are you mad, child ? What would you do ? "

Christine stopped, Christine stood alone and curtsyed low. "God give you grace, my lady. I go to walk with my love in the garden."

To the garden they went and there were long together,

close and speaking little, for of her mother she would not speak and of what was to come he would not think. He had his hour and was content in the joy of it.

While they walked in the fragrance of the sweetbrier hedge came a clash of horses at the gate. She bade him not heed, who was not heeding. It was she who stirred and started first. For she heard Osbern Shirley's voice: "Where then? In the garden, my lady? Content you, I must greet before I go my way." And Osbern came upon them. Hugh saw a gleam of breastplate, a smiling, eager face and then the smile was gone. Osbern had seen and had seen all.

"Lady Christine, I kiss your hands and your feet. What, Hugh Camoys is it? Well met! We must meet again, sir." He was gone and his horses clattered away.

Christine looked at Hugh. "That man means you ill."

"He has been my friend long years."

"Oh Hugh, Hugh!" She laughed sadly. "Each man is your friend whom you serve. Do not trust him. He wants what you have."

"What man would not? But Osbern hath loved me well."

"Never trust him, I say. Sir, sir, you must be gone to Hampton and find what he has to do. No, leave me now and quickly or I cannot bid you. Go."

When he was gone she hurried to her mother, a whirl of wrath. "Madame! Did you bring that man upon us?"

My Lady du Pré, pale and ill at ease, cried out, "No, child, no, it was not I. So he would ask for you and I could not stay him. Christine, believe me!"

"Why should I trust you now? Tell me, what brought him here?"

"He came seeking De Roffa. He has hunted him far. So he says, he is made Constable of Hampton."

"Osbern Shirley!" Christine cried. "Mother, if you told him how De Roffa fled I will never look on you again."

"I told him nothing, Christine." Her mother wept.

"I hope it be so. Madame, in the morning I go to Hampton, to Master Camoys."

"God help you, child," her mother sobbed. "God help us all."

"Ay, pray," Christine said dry eyed.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE KING'S WAY

WHEN Christine rode out of Romsey in the morning her mother went with her and they made some show with grooms of their own and foresters of the abbey. They were much observed in Hampton; it was remarked that they had ridden to the house of Hugh Carnoys and the town buzzed. For men had decided that his day was over. It was his mother who bade them welcome, amazed and fluttering, and nothing comforted when Christine kissed her. Hugh was gone to the castle at the call of Sir Osbern Shirley, she said. "If it please you, let us wait in your house till he comes again," said Christine meekly. "I think he would have it so." And Dame Carnoys found some relief for her troubled soul in making much ado for their entertainment.

Osbern had bidden mayor and aldermen to the castle, and he received them with forms and ceremony, men-at-arms in the courtyard, his squire to usher them into the hall, where he sat alone like a conqueror, wearing his breastplate, his sword on the table before him. "I greet you well, friends. You are to know that the traitor, Richard of Gloucester, is slain and King Henry hath won his realm by God's grace."

"God save him," Hugh said and the others echoed it.

"Well said, Master Mayor. The King hath sent me to Hampton to be his constable and establish his peace and seek out all traitors. I have summoned you to give me aid."

"We are the King's liege men," Hugh said.

"Well said again. First then of this knave De Roffa. Whither has he fled, Master Mayor?"

"By my faith, I cannot tell," Hugh said.

"Look you now, I have hunted him all the way from Bosworth field and never lost the scent till he came among you."

"Among us, sir? None has seen him in Hampton." Hugh turned to his aldermen and they echoed it, all save Tom Overey.

He laughed. "We have not seen the knave. It is not to us he would come, but to Master Mayor who was his familiar."

"Sir Osbern knows well how I stood with De Roffa," Hugh said.

"You were his man that he made mayor to serve him when I would not," Tom Overey cried.

"Is it so, Master Camoys?" Osbern smiled. "Why, I wondered how you were Mayor of Hampton."

"This is true, that Master Overey would serve no more, and De Roffa named me, and the aldermen would have me take it. And the town has had peace and Richard Crookback no help from Hampton!"

"Peace!" says Tom Overey. "Ay, you have kept the peace, when we would have risen against the traitor and declared for King Henry."

"Ay, when was that?" said Osbern quickly.

"When De Roffa was gone from us," Hugh said; "when King Henry's battle was in array."

"And even then you stood for Richard," Osbern cried. "You are stubborn and bold, Master Camoys."

"I am not Richard's man and have not been, Sir Osbern. You know me very well. I am Mayor of Hampton. It was my work to hold the town at peace."

"Yea, I know you. You have served many masters."

"I have served you in my day. Did I keep faith?"

"The house of Du Pré, my Lord Warwick, King Edward, King Richard—God's blood, Master Camoys, they have

ill-fortune whom you serve. I pray you, would you serve King Henry now ? ”

“ That will I.”

“ Come then, where is the traitor De Roffa.”

“ I know no more than any man here where he is.”

“ Now look you, I know something. In the morning yesterday De Roffa lay at the gate of Romsey Abbey and thither you came, and when you went again he rode after. Now, Master Camoys, where is he ? ”

“ I know neither where he is nor what he sought, but this only that he is not in house or ship of mine. Sir Osbern—time was when this same De Roffa hunted you as you him and charged it on me that I had you in hiding and brought my Lord Rivers——”

“ My Lord Rivers ! Ay, that was another you served. Out on you, you have betrayed one and all.”

“ You sit there to say so.”

“ What, would you mock at me now ? You are brazen, sirrah. You are found a traitor by your own word.” He shouted for a guard. “ The mayor there. Have him away and keep him close.”

“ So please you, by what right ? ” Hugh said.

“ In the King’s name, sirrah, and for the King’s justice.”

“ Bear me witness, my masters,” Hugh cried to his aldermen as he was marched out, “ I am held for the King to judge.”

“ A right swift judgment, I promise you,” Osbern laughed.

But the aldermen looked at one another and an old man made bold to say, “ Sir, he is our mayor and he is not judged.”

“ What, would you stand with him ? ”

“ We have our rights and our liberties.”

“ You are the King’s men.”

“ Ay, and you also, Osbern Shirley,” the old man said. “ Come, my brothers,” and they went their way with no word more, Tom Overey last and apart.

Osbern was something startled. “ God have mercy,

these sheep must try to bark ! " he said to his squire : and his temper was none the better for it. But as he sat and devised what account he should render to the King, he determined that the thing had gone well enough. By his own confession Hugh was proven art and part in De Roffa's escape. The fellow Overey—a lucky find that—bore witness he had worked against King Henry to the last. The man was black with treason. He could be hanged out of hand. Let them talk of their rights and liberties, they dared not uphold him.

While he considered of it he was told that my Lady du Pré had come to the castle. He went out into the courtyard to meet her, smiling and gracious, and found both her and Christine. " You do me high honour, lady. I am proud that it is I who welcome you again to Hampton Castle." He held her stirrup while she dismounted.

" You are kind to remind me. I thought never to come here again."

" It is a new time now. You and yours——"

" Sir, we thank you. Let me speak with you."

He led her into the hall. " I am your servant, my lady."

" You have made Master Hugh Camoys a prisoner."

" I must needs do my duty. The man is a traitor."

" What have you against him ? " Christine cried.

" He hath delivered the King's enemies. He——"

" He delivered you aforetime."

Osbern shook his head. " Alas, lady, he deceived you who said so. Hugh Camoys saved De Roffa from my hand to my danger."

" Well said, well said ! "

" Sir Osbern," says my lady, " I am come hither to speak with Master Camoys."

" You, my lady ! I pray you, what is the man to you ? "

" You know well. He is as my son."

" Hugh Camoys—and my Lady du Pré ! Lady Christine——"

" You are a good actor, sir," Christine cried.

"I have asked you to give me speech with Hugh Camoys," said my lady.

"Alas, my lady, I dare not. The man is held for a traitor confessed."

"You are false who say it," Christine cried.

"You have denied me," my lady said. "It will not serve you. Come, Christine. Rest there, sir. We need no more of you."

Osbern watched them mount and ride away and turned into the hall again cursing the old woman. Who could have thought she was for Hugh? My Lady du Pré with her pride to want that beggar's brat a mate for her daughter! The cunning rogue had bewitched her. She had friends, too, higher friends than he, who could be dangerous. The devil's own luck that she should be in Hampton. If he had hanged the knave already, no man could have stirred against him. Now—now she would swear that he did it to spite her girl. And the girl—curse her fierce blood—she would never look on him again. What o' God's name could she see in that whining cunning lout? Hugh Camoys, of all men, to take her proud fancy! And once she had been hot in Osbern Shirley's arms. Out on her, she was besotted.

Well, let her go yearn for her lout. She would be cool enough before he made her hot. He was undone. He should be sped. But a man must go about it warily. He sat down to write to the King that he held Hampton safe, but De Roffa had fled overseas by the help of the mayor, whom he held to answer for it and whom his aldermen denounced for other treason against the King.

He was half-way through that when the thought came to him that others might write to the King, too, and he gave orders to put a guard on all the landward gates. But before his men were out, the aldermen of Hampton had dispatched a petition to the King humbly showing that their mayor was taken by Sir Osbern Shirley and threatened with death untried, against their rights and liberties, and a groom of my lady's was riding fast with her plaint

to the chief of the old Lancastrians, the Bishop of Ely.

For a week Osbern had no answer and found it a week of trouble. The watch on the gates was so beset with crowds of townsfolk that he withdrew it, protesting it was only set against the King's enemies, and had it pelted in the street for his pains. If anything more than Hugh's imprisonment had been needed to win the town to him again, that guarding the gate had supplied it. The good folk of Hampton discovered that Hugh Camoys was the best mayor ever they had, the wisest merchant, the father of the poor. What ill had he done? Why, he had kept the town at peace while the great lords marched men to fight. He had stood for the town's liberties against that proud rogue, Osbern Shirley, who had found fortune by the wars, who was a Hampton lad himself and as poor as any, come back to trample on his own folk. Osbern Shirley, Lord Constable! Set a beggar o' horseback! Who had forgot him, a swaggering boy on the salt marsh, good for nought! Osbern Shirley to lord it over honest folk! Men came about the castle in the dusk to howl at him, grew bolder and gathered in broad day, shouting for their mayor and Hampton liberties, and Osbern who had not men enough to master a hostile town could but shut his gates and wait.

So it fared with him when a young fellow with some few men rode into Hampton and made his way to the castle and declared himself my Lord Strange with a message from the King. He was let in and saw a line of men at arms across the gateway to meet a rush of the crowd. "God defend us," he laughed as the gates clanged behind him. "Here is warm welcome." Osbern came forward to greet him. "Sir Osbern Shirley?"

"My lord, your father's son has right kind welcome from me."

"I thank you. I thank you and must know you better. Sir, you make merry cheer in Hampton."

"Why, this is but the rabble. Richard Crookback had

a man to be mayor here that bought them to serve him. They are nought. Come in, my lord, I pray you. You have a command to me from the King?"

"No more than this. He comes presently to Hampton and will honour you."

"The King himself?" Osbern cried.

My lord looked at him shrewdly. "What, sir, is it not safe in Hampton?"

"God's wounds, there is nothing to fear, my lord."

"Amen, so be it. And is there nothing to drink neither?"

"I cry your pardon." Osbern called for wine. "You shall forgive me, my lord. My mind was on the King's business. What would he have of me?"

"Why, man, bed and board and for a great company. Look to it."

"I will do my endeavour, who am newly come. But you have no other commands for me?"

"Not I. I do not know the King's mind, sir."

Osbern was busy enough that day and the next to provide himself from a sullen angry town, and in the evening the Hampton folk gazed upon a long column of horsemen wherein in the midst rode a slight man with a pale and furrowed face, like a sick priest, they said bitterly, when they knew it was the King. Not many a head was bared for him, not a voice raised to cheer him. Through crowds that rustled and stared his men bore him to the castle and Osbern found him coldly gracious as his wont was but with a baffling resolution to be private.

In the morning early my Lady du Pré was at the castle gate asking audience of the King. Osbern did not dare dismiss her. The King was still shut in his own apartment. That could be said and was said, but the Earl of Oxford, a bustling old man, had word of her and must needs greet her as her husband's friend and go speak for her. The King, whose piety held him over a book of prayers, would not be disturbed. She had some petition? My lord should hear it and advise him.

My lord came to her kindly and was not ill-pleased to

hear evil of Osbern. He had been of one side all his days ; he had no goodwill to the men of Osbern's sort who had only joined with his King, when they could find no other to favour them. But when it was revealed that her daughter had a mind to marry the imprisoned mayor he was much chilled. The heiress of Du Pré give herself to a Hampton mayor ! Why, she should wed with a man of birth and honour. The lands of Du Pré go to a merchant, the blood of Du Pré flow in a base townsman's brood ! A shameful thing. He could give no help in that nor would not. Bid the girl learn her duty.

He was rather enraged than softened by my lady's avowal that she approved the man and would maintain his cause. He bade her begone and she should hear the King's pleasure. The petition which he reported to an incurious majesty was that the woman wanted to marry her daughter to the rogue mayor that Osbern Shirley held for a traitor.

"The heiress of Du Pré to a merchant fellow, so please you. She is besotted, sir."

"Say you so ?" The King said. "Let her be." He rose languidly. "Give me your arm, my lord. Let us taste this sea wind."

Osbern, who had found no occasion to tell his tale to the King, who was eager to know what my lady had wrought, put himself in their way as they crossed the courtyard but had no more than a lifted hand for his pains. He watched them climb to the walls and after awhile followed them and found them pacing slowly on the seaward side, stopping often to look over the glittering silver of the haven and breathe the sunlit salt air. After awhile the King became aware of him. "You wait on me, Sir Osbern ? Fie, fie, never hang back. No man's business stays for my ease."

"I have some matter for you, my lord, the which I wrote you."

"Here am I, sir." The King sat down in an embrasure and drew his gown over his lean knees and beckoned him close.

"First of De Roffa, sir," Osbern began, and told how he was hunted to Romsey and there lost and of the part of the Mayor of Hampton in his vanishing, and the King listened and watched him but asked him nothing. When he stopped, waiting for something to come from the keen, intent face, it was left for my Lord Oxford to say, "He is escaped from you, then. And whither? You should know."

"I doubt it not, he is gone by stealth overseas," said Osbern.

"For which you blame this mayor."

"I shall show you reason": and he went on to tell of Hugh being made mayor by De Roffa in another man's stead to serve Richard Crookback and how he had furnished De Roffa moneys to marshal men for Richard and held the town for Richard to the last—all this with many a circumstance and talk of proof.

But some time before he had made an end the King had ceased to watch him. The King turned and gazed out over the haven and then rose up and leaned upon the battlements looking along the quays. It was some while after Osbern had ceased talking to his back before he spoke: "Here is a fleet of ships in the yards," said he. "I think there be King's ships in Hampton, friend?" He turned again and looked with curious eyes at Osbern's amazement.

"In faith, my lord, I cannot tell," Osbern cried.

"In faith, you have been busy," the King nodded.

"Well, I must speak with this mayor, it seems. Lead on, sir."

Osbern bowed. "Shall I bring him to the hall, my lord?"

"Nay, nay, he may give me audience," the King smiled. "Lead on."

"Give me leave, sir. He lies in a poor cell. He——"

"I said lead on, friend," said the King mildly.

They came down a narrow stair to the cell beneath the keep where Hugh lay and Osbern drew the bolts and

was going first when the King stayed him and passed in and shut the door behind him.

The cell was lit by a grating high in the wall. The faint light showed Hugh standing beneath it, his head thrown back to take the fresher air.

"Here is little ease, friend," the King's thin voice said.

"God send you better fortune, sir. What would you have of me?"

"Your help, an it please you."

Hugh stared at him. "Sir, there is no help in me. Are you sent to bear me company?"

"Yea, friend. Give me help. I am the King."

Hugh's head went round. "God have mercy, my lord! What fortune is this?"

"I am come to hear of your treason, Master Camoys. Tell it me, I pray you."

"My lord, this is a bitter jest. I have done you no wrong."

"It is said against you that you were De Roffa's man——"

"That he made me mayor of Hampton it is true."

"And that you delivered him from Osbern Shirley, when he lay stricken."

"It is true. Even as I delivered Osbern Shirley from him in the old time. I pray you, was that said?"

"Master Camoys, you are busy in deliverance."

"Are you come to shed blood, my lord?"

"You are bold, you are bold!"

"What shall I fear who have done no wrong?"

"Alas, sirrah, I am a simple man and you are too subtle for me. I must count it wrong to serve mine enemies while they be strong and save them while they be weak."

"I have done as I could and no man hath suffered by me."

"I could tell of one," said the King mildly. "You have had many a master, friend."

"So has this realm."

"Fie, fie! that is ill said to me," the King tittered. "I pray you which hath your heart?"

"My lord, I have been faithful to each in his day and have maintained their peace in Hampton."

"Faithful, quotha!" The King thrust at him with a lean finger. "What of the King's ships, sirrah?"

"My lord?"

"King Richard had good ships in Hampton and De Roffa was no slothful captain. What has come of the King's ships?"

"Why, my lord, I had them at hire sailing overseas for merchandise. And when they came back De Roffa had a mind to arm them and send them out to watch the Channel."

"I warrant him. Yet they kept no watch."

"No, my lord. It was in my mind King Richard would not give us peace. So I ordered it that the mariners declared the ships must go to the shipwrights before they could sail again, and the shipwrights were slow at their work and none other great ships were found in Hampton water. And no ships watched in the Channel and your armament came safe across the sea."

"And thus you served King Richard."

"Yea, my lord: and had peace for Hampton folk."

"You are a cunning knave, sirrah. I cannot tell why De Roffa did not hang you."

"So he would have done, my lord, if he had come back in power. I pray you, are you come to hang me?"

"A knave, a knave," the King said. "And therefore when he lay a broken man you delivered him. Yea, a very knave."

"I have done as I could, my lord. I pray your pardon for all."

"He saith pardon! The rogue saith pardon," the King murmured. "Master Mayor, do they love you well, your Hampton folk? By my faith, they love not me. Come, let us make adventure." He tapped on the door and as it opened and the dim, disturbed face of Osbern was revealed,

cried out, "Sirrah, go before. Open your gates." When they had climbed to the courtyard he took Hugh's arm and so walked with him out of the castle and down the castle hill, while the loitering folk gaped and gasped and drew away bare-headed and behind him fell a-shouting.

"Ay, ay, who is King in Hampton?" he smiled. And behind him the crowd grew and the din.

To Hugh's house they came, and there pale and wondering women looked out upon them, and when they came in fell on their knees before the King and kissed his hand.

"Peace be with you," he said, sitting down, and gathered his gown about him and fretted at the table with his hand. "Give you joy of him. He is a rogue. My lady, bear me witness, I have done your will. Come hither, child," he beckoned to Christine, a blaze of eyes in a white face. "You are she that would wed your lands to a merchant. God be with you, you are wise." He looked from Hugh's solemn bulk to her, from her to Hugh, and laughed. "Ay, so it goes, so it goes. Let him have you, he is your master and to-morrow is his." He nodded at them and fell to muttering, and in a little while plucked at Hugh's arm. "Master Mayor, touching my ships—it is you that pay the shipwrights' charges!"

"Surely, my lord," Hugh smiled. "For the damage was done on voyages for me."

"Ay, ay, that is just. What hire would you pay for a voyage to the southern sea?"

And the crowd that shuffled and rustled and murmured in the street began to shout for the King.